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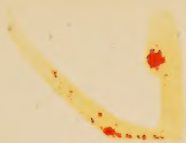
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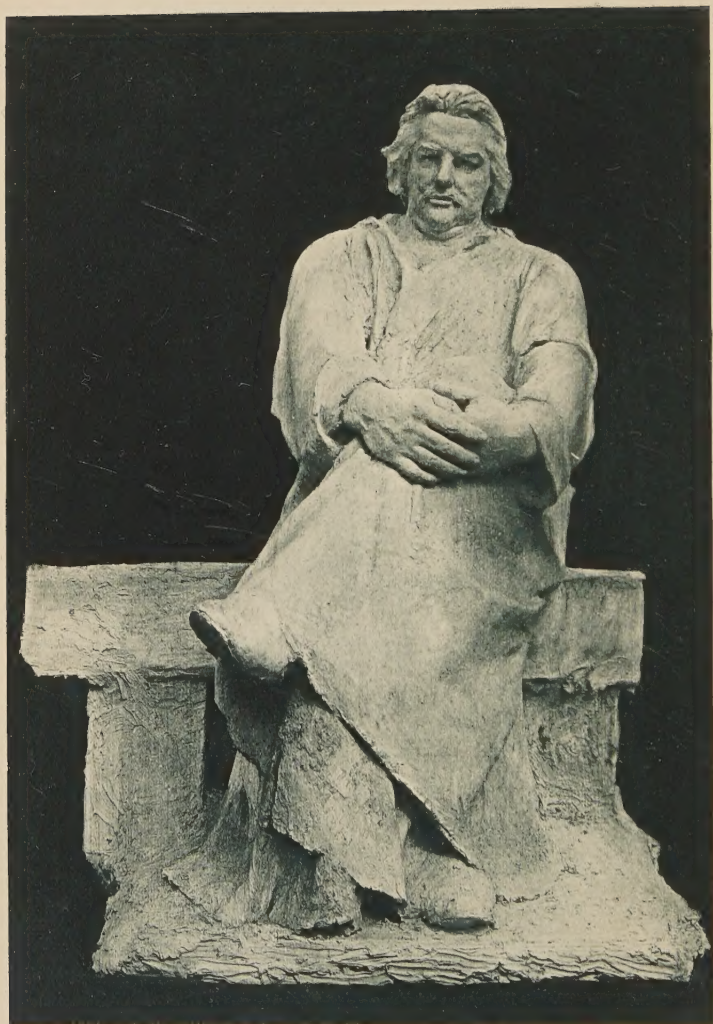








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THE STANDARD WORMELEY EDITION



# HONORÉ DE BALZAC

## PERSONAL OPINIONS

TAKEN FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE AND HIS MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS AND PRECEDED BY THE ADDRESS OF M. FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE DELIVERED AT TOURS MAY 6, 1899, ON THE OCCASION OF THE BALZAC CENTENARY



*Compiled and Translated by*

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY



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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

THIS volume contains some of the personal opinions of Honoré de Balzac as he has given them elsewhere than in the "Comédie Humaine." They are taken from the following writings, which form the concluding volumes of the *Édition Définitive* of his Works:

Essais Historiques et Politiques.

Portraits et Critiques Littéraires.

Physiognomies et Esquisses Parisiennes.

Correspondance. 1819-1850.

Also *Lettres à l'Étrangère*.

No references are quoted, because they would become monotonous and take up unnecessary space. But the passages in each division follow each other nearly always chronologically as Balzac wrote them; which will serve to mark the change, if any, in his opinions; and dates are given to show the period at which an opinion was expressed.

In a very few instances short passages from the "Comédie Humaine," or the "Mémorial of Balzac," have been repeated here, because they are pertinent to the topic in hand, and it seemed a pity to omit them merely on account of repetition.

May 16th, 1899.

The hundredth anniversary of Balzac's birth.



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# THE CENTENARY OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

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ADDRESS OF M. BRUNETIÈRE,

DELIVERED IN THE THEATRE AT TOURS, MAY 6, 1899.<sup>1</sup>

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IN 1858, less than ten years after his death, when posterity had scarcely begun for him, the great man whose centenary we this day celebrate was so well lauded by Taine, then almost unknown, in one of his first and finest Essays, that, in truth, I have felt some embarrassment, or even some scruples, at the mere idea of speaking after him of Honoré de Balzac. If there was ever anything "definitive" in criticism it would seem to be that penetrating analysis which Taine has made of Balzac's genius; and what utility can there be in redoing that which has been so well done? But without having that pretension, I have reflected, Messieurs, that forty-five years have gone by since then, and, as you are well aware, it is the property of great works to enrich themselves through time with new significations. In Molière's comedy there are things that the most admiring of his contemporaries never saw, which he himself, perhaps, did not know that

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Le Temps* of May 8th; from which this translation is made May 18th, 1899. Taken from a newspaper report at the last moment as this volume is going to press, some injustice may possibly be done to the words or thought of the speaker. — TR.

he had put there ; it is for this that he is Molière ; it is even what we mean when we say that his comedy is ever-living.

So with the novel of Balzac. It lives ! and that means that it does not cease to evolve or to develop itself. Forty-five years ago no one saw more in " An Historical Mystery " than a masterly judicial tale, but we, Messieurs, we can now find there an historical document of incomparable value. In " Sons of the Soil " could then be seen only a scene from country life, admirable for observation in the crudity of its realism ; to-day we find there a " sociological " study of which we scarcely dare to sound the disquieting depths. How many other examples might be given ! It was then seen, undoubtedly, how much of amplitude there was in the conception of " La Comédie Humaine," and no one, certainly, has shown it better than Taine ; but we see more to-day, we see the scientific, the truly scientific character of the work, and we recognize it as one of the great achievements of the century now ending.

It is, gentlemen, this development of the work of Balzac which I shall try to show you. The noble Essay of Taine cannot be remade, but we may endeavour, in some way, to continue or to prolong it. I have thought that such a purpose would accord better with the solemnity of this day than a mere discourse in which, for the twentieth time, I should relate to you Balzac's life, his education, his start in life, his industrial enterprise, the anecdotes that you all know, his great quarrel with Sainte-Beuve, his romance with *l'Étrangère* who became his wife. It is only writers of the second or third rank whose personality is more interesting than their works, and Balzac—he is of the first.

Will you permit me also, for the same reason, that is, because he is of the first rank and through that title not only do his defects disappear or become absorbed in the



radiance of his qualities, but they enter into the composition of those qualities themselves — will you permit me, in the first place, to avert from him two reproaches: the reproach of writing ill, and the reproach of immorality?

To blame him for writing ill, which is still done, and which I did myself many years ago when young, is to hark back to a conception of style a little narrow, and a little secluded, a style which one might perhaps define by the famous saying of Winckelmann: "Perfect beauty is like pure water, which has no particular taste." It dates from the time when the Apollo Belvedere, with its ideal, or rather its theoretical forms, devoid of all individual or characteristic accent, was thought to be the masterpiece of art. It is, of course, certain, Messieurs, that good water is good when it is very pure, or, to speak the truth, very insipid. It is also certain that in literature, at least in prose, we feel a keen pleasure, very natural and very legitimate, in seeing the precise outlines of the idea shaping themselves in the transparency of words. But we have grown more exacting of late. And in the novel, as on the stage, we have perceived that style does not consist essentially in either a correctness of which the merit does not go much beyond orthography, or in a facility, an abundance, a flux of words, which end — like the prose of George Sand — in giving a sensation of monotony, nor yet in that *artistic* writing of which Flaubert despaired, but perhaps, and solely, in the gift to *make living*. To make living — that, Messieurs, is what the modern artist desires above all to do; it is by that that we judge him; it is that which secures to him, in spite of the Schools, the duration of his work; and in that sense style, as the grammarians understand it, is nothing more and should be nothing more than a means.

I like to cite illustrious examples in support of this paradox; and is it not very curious that there are no

great writers who, with Balzac, have been more harshly cavilled at for their style than Molière and Saint-Simon? This is because their manner of writing has nothing in common with that of Dangeau and Casimir Delavigne. And why has it nothing in common with that manner? Because, Messieurs, Saint-Simon and Molière, like Balzac, worked from the living model, or because — for we must give due place to imagination in their work, and they are never minutely or punctiliously realistic — their object, to use Balzac's expression, is to "compete with the civil state," and no one succeeds in that by weighing syllables and matching words as we set jewels, or by measuring harmonious cadences. Life is a mingled thing, I do not see why I should not say a muddled thing. It is motion, disturbing all lines. It is confusion, disorder, unreason, irregularity. Nothing is more diverse, nothing more complex. It is weakened if simplified, it is extinguished if fixed. To change, moult, evolve, that is its definition. We can seize it only for a moment; we can only give the imitation, the image, the sensation of it by making language as changeable, so to speak, as supple, as undulating as life itself. That is what Molière, Saint-Simon and Balzac have striven to do. It is this eminent merit which Sainte-Beuve, who did not, as you know, like Balzac, nevertheless praised in him when he spoke of his style as being "of a delightful corruption, wholly Asiatic, as our masters would say, more broken in places, more flexible than the body of an antique mime." This is the idea that we boldly oppose to all the criticisms that have been made or that can be made on Balzac's style. But we do not accept that word *corruption*, even though it be relieved by the epithet "delightful" (not knowing, in fact, what delightful corruption may be); on the contrary, we shall say that what Sainte-Beuve, by a strange error on his part, has called *corruption* was the very effort of Balzac towards the faithful representation of life.

This, Messieurs, is so true that do you know when it is that Balzac writes badly? It is precisely when he applies himself to write well, when he wishes to produce effects of style. The same thing happened formerly to Molière in his "Don Garcia de Navarre," which I am tempted to call his "Lily of the Valley." "And I too, if I chose, I could be a stylist." It is when Balzac gives way to that temptation of "artistic writing" that he exposes, or rather offers, himself to the cavilling of purists. And the reason is very simple: it is because he is then thinking less of his subject than of himself; because he cares, at the moment, less to *make living* than to be eloquent, witty, poetical; it is because he is piqued into rivalry with Sainte-Beuve or George Sand. Who was it who said that "a good style is only the art of making one's self understood?" And, in truth, for a grammarian or a philosopher that may indeed be the whole of style. But for a dramatic author and a novel-writer, while it is that, undoubtedly, in the first place, there is something else in the second. We require him to persuade us of the reality of his fictions, and there is no way to do so but by believing in that reality himself; and he can only succeed in so believing according to the degree in which he casts off himself, to live solely in the life of his personages.

It is equally this gift for the *living life* which defends Balzac from the charge of immorality. Not that he may not seem to have sometimes deserved it, because it has been so often made to him, even since his death, and how can persons be wholly mistaken on that point? But here again we must distinguish, and, above all, state the matter clearly. All the vices which are ours, from the epic avarice of old Grandet to the dissolution of Baron Hulot, it is certain that Balzac has painted with inimitable strokes. It is also possible that there are in his work a few scenes of a touch almost libertine; naturally, I shall not point them out. And some persons insist that he too

willingly admires in a military bully like his Philippe Bridau, in a vulture like his Baron de Nucingen, in a jobber like his Rastignac, the spectacle of strength, or the development of will. Take notice that in this case Corneille himself may not escape the same reproach. But rather let us say, Messieurs, that if Balzac never held back without reason from depicting vice, and if, moreover, he has always called it by its name, if he was never mistaken, that I know of, in the quality of his personages or their actions, if, in short, he never admitted that his art was "play-work," let us say that, having given to that art for its object the true representation of life, he is neither more nor less immoral than life itself.

For *life is life*; we may strive with all our might to make it moral, but for six thousand years history stands forth to show us, without reference to the spectacle of contemporaneous morals, that we are far indeed from having succeeded. What we must allow to the historian shall we deny to the novelist? That would indeed be a strange theory. The knowledge which, from all time, is of the highest importance to us is the knowledge of ourselves, of our fellows, of those who surround us, of the vast world in which we occupy an almost imperceptible point of space and of duration. Who are these men we elbow? where are they rushing in such haste? to what work, to what pleasures? How do they differ from ourselves? and what have they in common with us? What are the springs that make them act? What do they love, what do they not love? What do they think of us, and what shall we think of them? Where find the reason of so many fortunes, the explanation of so many falls, the origin of so many crimes, the cause of so many vices, let us say also of so many virtues? To tell us all this, Messieurs, or rather to make us see it, is the province of the novel such as Balzac conceived it and such as he has



realized. But how could he have done this if his right had not extended, so to speak, over the totality of the life of his time? Let us deny to him, then, if we dare, the right of treating the novel as a representation of life. But if we do not dare, let us not talk about immorality. If Balzac's work were less like life some parts might, perhaps, be accused of immorality; but, even so, I shall say that in its entirety that is justified by the purpose, if not precisely moral at least social, to which it testifies.

Let me hasten to add that if corruption, vice, and crime hold their place assuredly in this work, virtue also holds hers. I have mentioned Baron Hulot, but his wife is a heroine of affection, devotion, and sacrifice. I have named Grandet, but where shall we find two figures less "idealized," I mean to say more "real," and nevertheless more pure, more noble, than those of his wife and daughter? No, convinced as he was of the thorough perversity of human nature, Balzac never committed the error of seeing nothing in life but its lamentable development. Tender, amiable, touching apparitions illumine with their light the darkness of his dramas. Cordelias are in his "Lear." You know their names. They are called Eugénie Grandet, Ursula Mirouet, Laurence de Cinq-Cygne. In the vast *tableau* of the society of his time which Balzac has bequeathed to us nothing would have lacked if death had not brutally interrupted his work. That is why of this *tableau*, such as it is, living in all its parts but more complete, more definitive in some and scarcely indicated in others, it has been said with justice — it is Taine who says it — that after, or with, the work of Shakespeare and Saint-Simon, "the work of Balzac is, undoubtedly, the greatest storehouse of documents that we have on human nature." I should like, Messieurs, if I am able, to particularize still farther, and try to tell you what is the value and price of these "documents."

They are, in the first place, *historical documents*; and if we desire to fully understand the bearing of that term we must remember the admiration which Balzac felt for Walter Scott. He writes to Mme. Hanska in 1838: "Beside Walter Scott, Lord Byron is nothing, or almost nothing. . . . Scott will still be growing greater when Byron is forgotten: I speak of Byron translated; for the poet in the original must last, if only for his form and his powerful inspiration. Byron's brain had never any other imprint than that of his own personality; whereas the whole world has posed before the creative genius of Scott, and has there, so to speak, beheld itself." I know not what the English of the present day may think of this judgment, but it has always surprised me that several of Balzac's admirers have been astonished by it. Balzac's earliest ambition was to walk in the footsteps of Walter Scott; and that ambition others than he have had, compatriots or neighbours of yours, Messieurs, the author of "Récits Mérovingiens," and the author of "Cinq-Mars," and for the same reasons as Balzac. Between 1815 and 1830 the world saw in the novels of Walter Scott, from his "Ivanhoe" to his "Rob Roy," representations, or rather "resurrections" of the past, truer than history itself, of the closest and yet the most general truth. It is this truth, this species of truth, so difficult to seize, that Balzac purposed within him to express in his work; and in this respect I think that justice has never been fully done to him.

Take for example, "The Chouans," one of his first works, or at any rate the one that he chose to save from the wreck of his youthful attempts. I doubt whether in any official history a more striking image of the wars of the Revolution has been drawn, or that any record can be found the psychology of which gives us a sensation more conformed to the truth. Take, also "An Historical Mystery," which is by no means the most quoted of Balzac's

works, though it is, none the less, one of the most finished. All the documents which have been of late years brought to light on the period of the Consulate confirm what there is of mingled recollection and divination in that picture of the state of parties, spirits, and morals on the eve of the proclamation of the Empire. And in the Napoleonic literature itself I know nothing more imperial than the audience given by the emperor to Mme. de Cinq-Cygne on the battlefield of Jena. But when their "God" was taken from them, do you wish to know what became, in the provinces and in Paris, under the government of the Restoration, of those soldiers whom so many years of war, harshly ended by the ruin of their hopes, had turned into bullies and veterans? Open "The Two Brothers" and find the astonishing figures of Maxence Gilet and Philippe Bridau. And behold, facing one another in "Cousine Bette," the Hulots and the Crevels, the last relics of the great administrations of the Empire and the bourgeois paid elector of the monarchy of July. How like they are to those we have known! What truth! What distinctness! What fidelity, even in caricature! Thus, as in a gallery, defile before us three or four generations of our fathers; fixed, for us, in their essential features; summed up and presented with an art which belongs only to great painters. Do you ask me if I will guarantee the resemblance? Yes, I will, and for two reasons: first, these three or four generations have but few traits in common; they do not resemble one another; we distinguish each: secondly, the eye not only seizes these differences, but the mind follows their genesis, and we see how these children have issued from those fathers.

Remark another effect of this manner of conceiving the novel. That which least interests us in daily life, and to which we give the least and most heedless attention is precisely that which characterizes its physiognomy. We leave to the fashion-papers the description of social elegance;

no doubt we are not indifferent to the quality of the dishes served on our tables, but we do not make it the habitual topic of our conversations. It is even good taste not to do so; we do not examine too closely the silver at the houses where we dine; we do not finger coats and gowns to see, like Tartuffe, "if the stuff is soft." It is otherwise in history; and for a hundred years, remember, nothing interests us more than just such details which externally distinguish epochs. The description of a costume or a piece of furniture forms part of the scene, part of the historical colour; we sometimes commit, it is true, very singular anachronisms, but we do not put Hamlet in a wig, or Phèdre or Bérénice in a French court dress. Now, if these details have an interest; if it is they which localize, particularize, differentiate sentiments by habits and manners; if it is they, in short, which we enjoy in history, why should we not observe them in the present? for may we not be certain that the interest we think they do not have, they assuredly will have at a future day? It is thus, Messieurs, that historical documents become what I have called "naturalistic documents;" and, in truth, that is the second characteristic of Balzac's novels. Those novels are *naturalistic*, that is, *realistic* novels.

Let us understand ourselves on that term thoroughly; it does not mean that they are pessimistic novels; on the contrary, in many of them there is no lack of sympathy, of sentiment, or even of the "religion of human suffering." See "The Country Doctor" or "The Village Rector." Neither does it mean that imagination has no part in them: none of Balzac's contemporaries had more imagination than he, or an imagination, at times, more romantic, untrammelled, phantasmal, magnificent than his. But it does mean, Messieurs, that, even when he imagines or invents, *detail*, precise and concrete, picturesque and representative, abounds in his work. Landscapes, descriptions of places and cities, furniture and clothing, inventories, notarial

accounts, genealogies, physiological peculiarities of personages — Balzac has neglected none, forgotten none, omitted none that could give to his fictions an air of reality. He excels also in noting, by brief indications, the subtle connections which make an individual the true son of his father, the child of his province, an abridged image, an epitome of the manners, morals, and spirit of his time. And all this, thanks to him, has become familiar to us, though it must be said that his imitators have strangely abused it; but before him it was precisely this that was lacking to the novel. Balzac's novels are realistic or naturalistic exactly to the degree in which they differ from "Volupté," "Valentine," "Indiana," "Delphine," "Adolphe," "Manon Lescaut," "La Princesse de Clèves." We are no longer in an ideal world or a world idealized by the suppression of details considered until then vulgar, but in the daily life of human beings. The personages are not types, they are individuals engaged, like ourselves, in a condition, a trade, a profession; and — what finally distinguishes them from the heroes of classic romance — while they may indeed be lovers (for is there ever a romance without love?), they do much else than make love; and here again it is that they are *realistic*.

Although the passions of love do not fail to respond to very real realities, a writer who respects himself cannot avoid idealizing them. They are not the only springs that move mankind, and yet one would think they were in reading most of our novelists. I say most, for exception must be made of the author of "Gil Blas" and the "Diable Boiteux." But as it was long believed that, in novels or on the stage, love was nothing if it was not all, — love or the diversity of intercourse that passes under that name, — it resulted that all novels of love were *idealistic* novels. Balzac saw more widely, more deeply. Mankind does not live by love; and the leisure to love belongs in this world to a few rarely privileged persons. We have all, not, if



you choose, our fortunes to make, but interests to calculate. In other words, the question of money, which men could affect to disdain in aristocratic societies, has become the great question of our modern democracies; and this, Balzac, the contemporary of the transformation, saw perfectly. His own start in life in a lawyer's office, the difficulties he encountered, the materialism of his temperament, the impatience with which he bore this dominion of money, all contributed to open his eyes. He rendered account to himself that around him neither love nor glory was henceforth to be the idol of mankind, but *money*, and that the greatest efforts of his contemporaries were put forth to procure it. He therefore made money one of the great motive powers of his "*Comédie Humaine*;" and here again, in this sense, on this ground it is that his novels are realistic novels.

Yes, realistic in this sense; and not solely because the concerns of money have always something rather low about them, but because the question of money cannot be treated without linking it to a crowd of other questions, especially that of the methods of making it. How is fortune made? No doubt there are as many methods as there are sources of wealth: sordid economy, usury, agriculture, manufactures, trade, speculation, finance; the novelist had to know them all; he studied their mechanism and their repercussions, and you see the results. Subjects wholly new, of which assuredly the author of "*Manon Lescaut*" or of "*Adolphe*" would never have thought, came to our novelist, and we are entrapped into an interest in the operations of Père Grandet, the chemical inventions of César Birotteau, the usurious inventions of the terrible Gobseck. New men, new conditions, were introduced with these questions: business men, notaries, bankers, lawyers, sheriffs, brokers. It was necessary to make them talk their own language, one might even say their own slang. If they had spoken in the language of Voltaire

and Condillac they would not have understood each other, and we should have had nothing but a superficial knowledge of them. An injunction is an injunction, and there are not two words to express the indorsement of a note. Neither do we know a paraphrase which would not be ridiculous to avoid naming a "depilatory paste."

But this mingling of all *argots*, this contact with all trades, this putting to work of all sorts and conditions of men, these technological descriptions, are they not that which makes Balzac's novel so lifelike? We stand on a level with his personages; we know them, for we elbow them in the street; we have ourselves had dealings with a good many of them. In short, it is not only the *author* who has disappeared, it is the man himself, in order to leave us face to face with reality.

Though Balzac had his own ideas, political, religious, philosophical, or literary, and though he loudly expressed them, even in his novels, it can be said, in fact it should be said, that they never reacted on the selection of his plots or on that of his personages. This is what distinguishes him from the romanticists. He has put nothing of himself, of his own personality into his work. His observation is always impersonal, and his art always disinterested. Its import is external to himself, — *objective*, as philosophers would say, *sociological*, as we ourselves say to-day. And moreover, when the idea came to him of uniting all his novels together, of making them not only a succession of continued episodes explained and completed the one by the others, but a complete picture of the society of his time, he then, if he had overlooked some feature, did not fail to perceive it; the nature of his work appeared more clearly to himself; he comprehended that his literary function was in his disinterested observation; and it was then that his work became what may in truth be called a scientific document.

Alone, or almost alone of his contemporaries — and by

them I mean the writers, poets, novelists, dramatic authors, philosophers even, and historians — Balzac was not indifferent to the scientific movement of the epoch. Recall his “César Birotteau” for instance, or “The Alkahest;” but above all, remember the eulogy he makes in the preface to “*La Comédie Humaine*” on Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire. I wish to state that Balzac was among the first — and, by a curious coincidence, at the same time with Auguste Comte, founder of positivism — to foresee the future of natural sciences, biological sciences, and the revolution they were in process of accomplishing in the domain of thought. That is not his least merit or his least originality, which we can especially appreciate when we compare the intelligent curiosity they prove with the monumental ignorance of the George Sands and the Victor Hugos. The novels of Balzac, scientific already from the nature of the observation and the disinterestedness or impartiality of the observer, are still more so by the inward purpose of which they bear the trace. You know, also, that they are so by the nature of the general idea which serves them as a link.

As to this we must quote him textually: “Impressed by this system” (that of Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire), “I saw that Society resembles Nature. Society makes the man; he develops according to the social centres in which he is placed; there are as many different men as there are species in zoölogy. The differences between a soldier, a workman, an administrator, a lawyer, a man of leisure, a scholar, a statesman, a merchant, a sailor, a poet, a beggar, a priest, though more difficult to decipher, are as considerable as those which separate the wolf, the lion, the ass, the crow, the shark, the seal, the lamb, etc. There have always been, and ever will be social species, just as there are zoölogical species. If Buffon achieved a magnificent work when he put together in a book the whole scheme of zoölogy, is there not a work of the same

kind to be done for Society?" Certainly, Messieurs, there seems to be some confusion in these remarks, and also exaggeration. We may doubt if between an administrator and a man of leisure the difference is the same and of the same nature as between a seal and a crow. Nothing is more easy than to make a man of leisure of an administrator, but it is not proved that time itself could easily transform a seal into a crow. Balzac himself must have seen this, and he admitted that the social species had not the same fixity as the zoölogical species. But what is here of importance is the intention, the general idea, the ambition clearly declared to make the novel a natural history of civilized man. And in this respect it is certain that we may indeed class Balzac's personages in categories analogous to those of zoölogy; from the infinitely small ones who work in the shade (like his country-folk, his Tonsard, his Père Fourchon modifying, all unknowing what they do, the very structure of society) to the great species of his Nucingens, his Vautrins, his Rastignacs, his Bridaus.

As to what this idea may be worth in itself, and whether there may not be some inconvenience or even some danger in welding thus the history of man to that of the animal, is another question which I should not myself solve like Balzac; but I do not think that this is the time to examine it. It suffices that it has given to Balzac's work that character of unity which distinguishes it so deeply from the work of all other novel-writers. Through the intention which animates them, and did animate them before he conceived the plan of his "*Comédie Humaine*," Balzac's novels are in truth, what we have already called them, scientific documents. The historian may consult them: he will there find what is not in histories; I mean the reasons, in some sort individual, of social transformations. The philosopher may have recourse to them: he will there find laid down certain of the problems which

have, from all time, disturbed the human intellect. The sociologist ought to meditate upon them. And, choice privilege! those of us who pique ourselves on being neither philosophers nor historians nor sociologists will find there, more vivid perhaps than elsewhere, that species of amusement and charm and satisfaction which we ask of a novel.

Shall we now sum up the matter and, fifty years after his death — which is, no doubt, a rather long space of time — shall we try to find his place in the history of literature and in the thought of this century? It is not, after all, that his contemporaries have too harshly contested it, and I ask no other proof of this than the discourse delivered by Victor Hugo at the grave of the author of the “*Comédie Humaine*.” The contemporaries did not ignore the genius of Balzac; but, naturally, though they recognized its power, they understood its nature less clearly. It is, as I said before, the attribute of strong and durable works that their depth and import should not be at first perceived. Time is a great teacher, as the proverb says, and men did not see, they could not see half a century ago all the importance of the work and the rôle of Balzac.

Thus it was that they took him for a romanticist; and not only is there nothing more false, but, on the contrary, if any one, while generously praising its masters, has reacted against romanticism it is Balzac. To the personal novel, — such as “*René*,” “*Delphine*,” “*Adolphe*,” “*Indiana*,” “*La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*,” “*Volupté*,” “*Graziella*,” — in which the writer himself is the hero around whom gravitate, like stars of the lowest magnitude, those whom he calls his executioners and who are often his victims, to this personal, egotistic novel Balzac substituted the *novel of others*. To the subtleties, and, moreover, to the habitual insignificance of a psychol-



ogy which bounds its observation by the "I" — and an "I" that is always more interesting and noble than nature — Balzac substituted observation beyond self, observation of the *without*, the only observation that can truly enrich our experience, always too limited in some direction, and the only one, consequently, from which we derive some knowledge of the realities of life. And for individual art, founded on impressions of which the artist considers himself the sole judge, Balzac substituted what we may call social art; I mean that art on the value of which each one of us is called to pass judgment. It is that which has transformed (from for to against) the literature of the century now ending; and we might say, in a manner that is slightly symbolical, that while the great name of Victor Hugo stands for the novelties, the aspirations, the esthetics of romanticism, the name of Balzac dominates, has dominated the movement of anti-romanticism. Perhaps you will be astonished at the conjunction, but I do not fear to offer the opinion that, in this respect, Auguste Comte alone has done more or as much as he.

His influence in this respect has extended to criticism, and Taine, the author of the eloquent Essay which I recalled to you at the beginning of this address, proceeds as much from Balzac as from any of his masters, from Spinoza, Hegel, or Comte. Taine, like Balzac, attempted to define *literary species* in his first writings, and in his last, like Balzac, he tried *social species*. He was equally inspired by him in founding his theory of Race, Environment, Moment. It may be that here we shall see the true reason of the intellectual quarrel between Balzac and Sainte-Beuve. You know that they both made a point, for reasons of apparently little importance, to be sovereignly unjust the one to the other. But the true reason lies elsewhere. They both in reality had the same purpose: the Social Species of Balzac were the Groups of Minds of Sainte-Beuve; there is as much

physiology in the "Portraits Littéraires" or "Contemporains" as in Balzac's novels. Their methods alone differed; those of Balzac were synthesis, those of Sainte-Beuve were analysis; one was the Cuvier, the other was the Geoffroy de Sainte-Hilaire of psychological natural history; and striving thus for the same public they did not harmonize. They are of those whom posterity can and should reconcile in death. The service they have done us is, at bottom, of the same nature, and though criticism, such as they conceived it, is not, at least in my opinion, the whole of criticism, it is, and it will ever remain the basis of all criticism.

Do I need to tell you after this of the influence Balzac has exercised on the evolution of the contemporary novel, — how, in the first place, he has enlarged its domain, broadened, specified, formulated its definition; what scope he has given to it; how he has equalled it to the totality of the display of life itself; the right he has conquered for it to treat of all questions; the variety of forms of which he has rendered it capable? Men have generally seen in him, they have affected to only see in him, the ancestor of naturalism; and he is that, undoubtedly he is that, and I have tried to show you why. But let us be less exclusive. Let us recognize that in all novels of the class called "psychological" there is a memory of the "Lily of the Valley." Let us recognize that in "Cousine Bette" or in "Eugénie Grandet" are all the novels which we now have as "studies of character." Let us recognize that the genealogy of all police or judiciary novels, the novels of Ponson du Terrail or Gaboriau goes back to the "Last Incarnation of Vautrin." To speak plainly, without discussing or delaying longer, there is in the history of our literary genius but one dominating power which has been exercised with the universality of that of Balzac — it is that of Molière.

What does that mean, Messieurs? Without delaying to

draw a formal parallel how shall we explain that remark? A few words will suffice. Molière, in a period of fifteen years, made himself master of the whole domain of comedy; he took, almost without seeming to do so, such lasting possession of it, and, even in his sketches, he has so deeply stamped his imprint upon it that for more than two hundred years, not only in France but in Europe, a comedy is judged good and worthy of duration only as it approaches the comedy of Molière. So with Balzac. Fifty years after his death we have not shaken off his influence. With all his defects — and he has them — Balzac remains the model and the master. His death has not exhausted his creative power. And which of us, Messieurs, does not congratulate himself on our right to be proud of the prestige which his novels still continue to exercise in the world?

Let me now speak of the stage. Who does not know that if such dramatic writers as Augier, Dumas, and perhaps Labiche, have revived the comedy of Molière, it is thanks to Balzac, and by his methods. What are the “*Mariage d'Olympe*” and, above all, “*Les Lionnes pauvres*” if not Balzac's subjects? What else is “*Maître Guérin*?” And I venture to say as much of the “*Demi-Monde*” and the “*Question d'Argent*.” I should never finish if I prolonged the enumeration, and as I begin to fear that I am already too long, I shall say but a few words more and then conclude.

If we are to believe certain critics it is not only upon literature that Balzac's influence is exercised, but also upon *les mœurs* [manners and morals] and not less deeply. Two or three generations of young men, it is said, have modelled themselves on the heroes of the “*Comédie Humaine* ;” they have not only learned but “studied” life in Balzac's novels; they have proposed to themselves to realize the conception of his Rastignacs and de Marsays. Perhaps in saying this, which is saying much, the intention

was to praise Balzac; but I am not sure that it does not do injustice to a large part of his genius. Remember that Balzac did not invent Rastignac; he did not imagine him; he copied him; we know his real name. In like manner he copied his men of letters, Canalis, d'Arthèz, Nathan, Blondet, Lousteau; and also his financiers. They existed before him; and before him existed also appetites more or less new, modern ambitions, "means of succeeding," the vices and even the virtues of which those persons are the representatives in his work. Before him, or in his day, they were already on the stage, and the example of their luck sufficed, before Balzac, to create their imitators in crowds. But as Balzac had the gift of life, as his genius consisted in part in placing himself at the centre, the meeting, the confluence of the great movements of the ideas of his time, as his curiosity, ever awake, traced them up to their origin, it has resulted that the "*Comédie Humaine*" is found to be more true, more evidently true ten, fifteen, twenty years, fifty years after Balzac's death than at the time he published it. I remember having seen a description in a natural history, under the heading of "*Prophetic Types*," of beings, or even whole species which was merely the outline or the sketch of their future achievements and perfection. In like manner, of a whole humanity which could only attain its development after him, Balzac, in this a true poet, Balzac has drawn the lineaments.

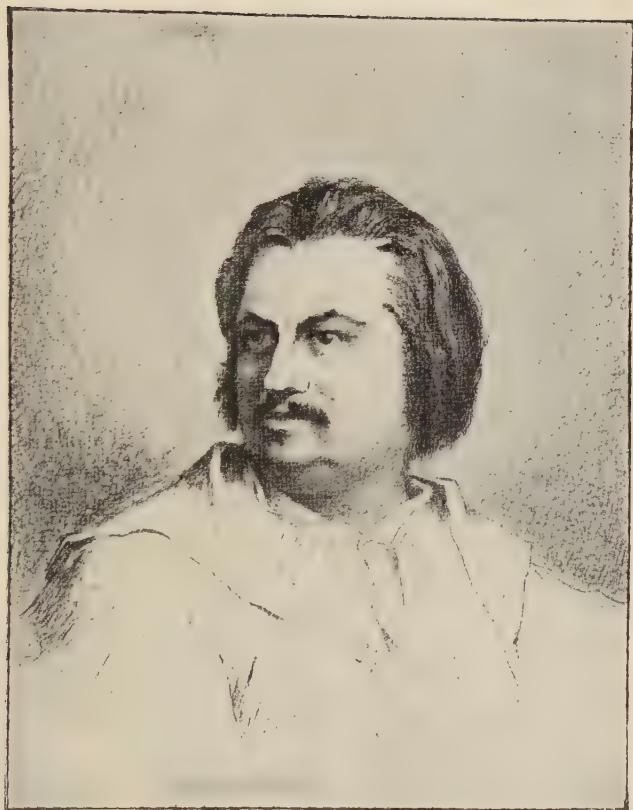
You can well believe, Messieurs, that in thus expressing myself I am not "*diminishing*" Balzac. On the contrary, you will see in what I say the testimony of my admiration; for if among all the privileges of genius it is one to light with its torch the obscurities of the past, and another to make lucid the confusions of the present, the noblest, without a doubt, and the rarest, is to forestall, like Balzac, the future.

FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE.

*Portrait of Balzac by De Hédouin.*









# PERSONAL OPINIONS

OF

## HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

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### I.

#### HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL.

*His first Work, Cromwell. The Jesuits. France after the Revolution of July.*

[HIS FIRST WORK, CROMWELL.]

TO HIS SISTER.

PARIS, 1820.

DEAR LAURE, — It is no commonplace gift and no small proof of friendship that I give you in permitting you to assist at the birth of genius (Yes, laugh away!). As my thought is still only a project I leave a wide margin to my paper, on which I will allow you to write your sublime observations. But in spite of this great liberty, read with respect the plan of Sophocles junior.

I have, my dear, determined on *Cromwell*. He will be finished in five or six months, but roughly, at one dash, because when the picture is once sketched, I want to put in the colours at my ease. I am beginning to sit up all night, but the cold does sting me, as papa says, and I am going to buy an old office arm-chair, which will protect at least my sides and back. Don't tell mamma about my nocturnal labours; and don't write to me about them either; but I must, if I die for it, do *Cromwell*, and have something to show when mamma asks account of my time. I expect to win my independence from it.

I decided, finally, to choose the subject of Cromwell because it is the finest in modern history. Since taking it up and weighing it I have flung myself into it with all my soul. Ideas crowd upon me, but I am constantly checked by my want of talent for versification. I shall bite my nails off more than once before I finish the first act. If you only knew the difficulty of such work! The great Racine spent two years in polishing "*Phèdre*," the despair of poets. Two years! . . . two years! . . . think of it! . . . two years! . . .

But it is sweet, in consuming myself night and day, to associate my work with those who are dear to me. Ah! sister, if Heaven has endowed me with some talent, my greatest joy will be to see my fame reflected upon all of you. What happiness to vanquish obscurity! to distinguish once more the name of Balzac! At these thoughts my blood foams! When I grasp a fine idea I seem to hear a voice crying to me: "Go on, courage!"

I have abandoned my comic-opera; I could not find a composer in my hole. Besides, I ought not to write for present tastes, but do as the Racines and the Corneilles did — work like them for posterity. . . . And then, reflection for reflection, I prefer to reflect on Cromwell. But there are usually two thousand lines in a tragedy; imagine, therefore, the reflections! Pity me — What am I saying? No, don't pity me, for I am happy. Envy me, therefore, and think of me often.

I promise you that as soon as the first act is nearly polished, when there is only a last touch to give, I will send it to you. But *mum* is the word! The devil! this is no joke.

I have been greatly puzzled; and this is why: (Here you are competent to judge.) Strafford brings the queen to Westminster; but she is obliged to take off her royal garments in order to cross the country and London and enter the palace. What ought to be her chief feeling in

such a situation? After much hesitation I give the preference to humiliated pride. No one but a woman can tell me if I am right.

Ah! sister, what torments does the love of glory bring! Long live the grocers, *morbleu!* They sell all day and count their gains at night, they delectate themselves from time to time with awful melodramas, and are happy! . . . Yes, but they have to spend their lives between soap and cheese. No, long live men of letters! . . . Yes, but they are such paupers in money, rich only in pride. Bah! let's leave them, each to his own, and long live everybody!

You must know that I lighten my heavy toil by dashing down a story in the antique style. But I only do it word by word, thought by thought, or to express it better, *ab hoc et ab hac*. I seldom go out, but when I do *divagate* I go and amuse myself in Père La Chaise.

I now experience that wealth does not make happiness; and the time I spend here [this was the time when his parents allowed him to try, on a pittance, the experiment of a literary life] will be to me a source of sweetest memories. To live as I please, to work in my own way, to my own taste, to do nothing if I so wish, to sleep upon the future I imagine so glorious, to think of you and know you happy, to have Rousseau's Julie for a mistress, La Fontaine and Molière for friends, Racine for my master, and Père La Chaise for my walks!

Oh! if it could last thus always! I have no other anxiety than to improve myself, and all my sorrows come from the little talent that I seem to have. . . . To the devil with mediocrity! to the devil with the Pradons and the Bauvarlets! one must be Grétry and Racine.

I leave you now to go to Père La Chaise and study sorrows just as you make studies in outline. I have abandoned the Jardin des Plantes because it was too sad. . . .

I have just returned from Père La Chaise, where I drank in good inspiring reflections. Decidedly, there are no such fine epitaphs as these: LA FONTAINE, MASSÉNA, MOLIERE, — names that tell all and make the passer dream! . . . Of all the affections of the soul sorrow is the most difficult to depict; in this we moderns are the very humble servants of the ancients, and that redoubles my fears for the fifth act of my Regicide. Here's my sketch:—

#### FIRST ACT.

Henrietta of England, exhausted by fatigue and disguised in humble garments, enters Westminster, guided by the son of Strafford; she returns from a long journey; she has been, by order of Charles I., to take her children to Holland and to solicit the help of the Court of France. Strafford, in tears, tells her of recent events; the king, prisoner in Westminster, accused by parliament, awaits his trial. Impulse of the queen at this news to share the fate of her husband.

Enter Cromwell and his son-in-law Ireton; they have given rendezvous to the conspirators in this place.

The queen, frightened, conceals herself behind a royal tomb.

The conspirators arrive; she hears them debate whether the king shall, or shall not, be put to death. Strong scene, in which Fairfax (honest man) defends the life of the illustrious prisoner, and unveils the ambition of Cromwell. The latter reassures all present. After which they decide for the penalty of death.

The queen comes forth and makes them a great speech. Cromwell and his friends let her talk, delighted to obtain a victim who was lacking to them. He goes out with his accomplices to secure the fulfilment of their project. The queen goes to the king.



SECOND ACT.

Charles I., alone, recalls to memory the events and the acts of his reign. What a monologue!

The queen enters. Here is where talent is wanted! Conjugal love upon the scene the only broth! it must influence the whole play. In this sorrowful interview there must be a tone so melancholy, touching, tender, thoughts so pure, so fresh that I despair of it. It must be sublime from first to last—like the “Atala” of Girodet in painting. If you have the Ossianic fibre send me a few colours, dear, good, little sister, whom I love.

Cromwell comes to take the king before parliament. Thorny scene here, in which the widely different characters of the three personages must each be set in relief (difficult historical study).

Strafford enters to tell the queen that a small army of royalists has seized Cromwell’s sons on their way back from subduing Ireland. By putting Cromwell between his sons and the king, Charles I. may yet be saved. Act ends with a gleam of hope.

THIRD ACT.

Cromwell awaits the queen. She comes; tells him the above; and puts him in the alternative of choosing. Great struggle in the soul of the Protector. The king enters and informs Cromwell he has ordered that his sons be returned to him unconditionally. Cromwell goes out; leaving the spectator doubtful and expectant.

Scene between the king and queen, then Strafford, who requests the king to observe that he has himself placed his head beneath the axe.

FOURTH ACT.

Westminster Hall. Cromwell arrives. Ambition now possesses him. Parliament assembles. The king ap-

pears and speaks, for the first and last time, in a tone — (now here one *must* be sublime). The queen, indignant, appears and defends — God knows how! — her devil of a husband. Cromwell, seeing that the parliament softens, orders the king and queen to be removed. As the guards are leading them away, the queen makes a last effort upon Cromwell; offers him honours, titles, etc. Cromwell remains cold. The queen goes out in despair.

#### FIFTH ACT, and the most difficult.

The sentence is not yet known, but Charles I. does not deceive himself; he tells the queen his last wishes. (What a scene!) Strafford hears of the condemnation and comes to tell his master, that he may be prepared when they announce it to him. (What a scene!) Ireton enters to take the king before his judges. Charles I. tells Strafford he reserves to him the honour of attending him to the scaffold. Farewells of the king and queen. (What a scene!)

Fairfax rushes in; he warns the queen of her danger; she must fly instantly; they intend to make her a prisoner and bring her to trial.

The queen, absorbed in her despair, pays no heed to him at first; then suddenly breaks forth in imprecations against England: she will live for vengeance; she will rouse enemies to England everywhere; France shall fight her, vanquish her, crush her! . . .

A great final outburst! and I need not tell you it shall be let off by the hand of a master.

The pit, bathed in tears, will go home to bed. Have I enough talent? I want my tragedy to be the breviary of peoples and kings!

I must start with a masterpiece, or wring my neck. . . . I implore you, by our fraternal love, never say to

me: "That is good;" tell me only the faults. As for the beauties, I know them.

If any thoughts occur to you as you go along, write them on the margin. Never mind pretty things; I want only sublime ones.

It is impossible that you should not think this plan superb. What a fine presentation! How the interest increases from scene to scene! The incident of the sons of Cromwell is admirable. I also invented, most happily, that character of Strafford's son. The magnanimity of Charles I. in restoring to Cromwell those sons of his is finer than that of Augustus forgiving Cinna.

There are some faults, but they are slight, and I shall make them disappear.

What gives me most trouble is the explaining. That bold fellow Strafford has to speak the portrait of the regicide — and Bossuet awes me.

However, I have written some lines that are not so bad.

Ah! sister, sister! what hopes! what deceptions! . . . perhaps! perhaps!

[To the same.]

1822.

My ideas change so much that the *doing* [*le faire*] must change too. . . . Before long there will be between the I of to-day and the I of to-morrow all the difference that exists between a lad of twenty and a man of thirty. I reflect; my ideas ripen; I see that Nature has treated me favourably in giving me my heart and my head. Believe me, dear sister — for I need a believer — I do not despair of being something, some day. I see now that "Cromwell" had not even the merit of being an embryo. As for my novels [his juvenile books] they are not worth the devil — and not as tempting as he either.

[THE JESUITS.]

1824.

A society composed, like the Jesuits, of a multitude of persons bound together by a mass of interests, and possessing immense property, becomes a political being of far greater interest than a private personage, however rich and influential he is thought to be. The Order was suppressed by Clement XIV. in 1773, having already been dissolved in each of the European states by their several kings. Kingdoms were then governed despotically; the Society had but one course to follow: that of submitting without raising its voice. Condemned unheard, the Order of the Jesuits resigned itself.

It was condemned with the utmost injustice, at any rate as to forms; the most sacred rights were violated, if we consider those rights as the basis of human legislation; the Society was judged without being suffered to appear and present its defence. The property of the Society had been freely given to it by many and various persons; it was an odious act to take it arbitrarily away. The Society could be dissolved, but no authority had the right to rob it of its possessions. It was forced to obey passively, without even being granted the power to publish an apologetic defence.

This situation of the Order and its persecutors had not changed when the Revolution broke out. In that great movement of the peoples it was all the more impossible for the Jesuits to defend themselves because the different legislative bodies had annihilated all the religious Orders; besides which, the Society, now scattered, was no longer a body in a fit state to do so.

After the Revolution the first effort of the remnant of the celebrated Society was to obtain the re-establishment of the Order. Once more a being, a body, it could endeavour to give life to truth and bring before the public mind the honourable history of its Order, which shares with that of the Templars the highest fame that

talents and persecutions have bestowed upon brotherhoods.

But the reign of Bonaparte was little favourable to historical truth. Though Napoleon may have had the idea (as some of his acts seem to show) of making use of the instruction of the Society of Jesus in consolidating his dynasty, he would have acted, if at all, against his own wishes and convictions. It is safe to say that he would have smothered any bold and honourable effort on the part of the Jesuits, because his throne rested on a basis of too many conflicting elements, and the various revolutionary parties whom he was trying to restrain and hoodwink would have manifested their alarm too loudly.

The return of an august dynasty to the throne of its fathers, the establishment of a constitutional system in France, and the liberty of the press are favourable omens for the Society. For the first time in fifty years a voice may dare to uplift itself in favour of that celebrated institution and tell the historical truth about it.

My words are not addressed to any party, to any special opinions, but solely to upright minds with a sentiment of natural equity. All I ask is that bias, hostile or favourable, be laid aside, and that men shall form a personal opinion, not adopting those that others have formed, but following the voice of their own conscience. I also ask to have it borne in mind that what I now say is derived from *all* the writings which the spirit of party and intolerance has brought forth against the Jesuits. If the mass of facts reported by the enemies of the Society shows a history wholly to its advantage I shall have done my share of the task in presenting it. I shall give those facts in all their simplicity, and my remarks are sincere and in good faith.

In 1491, under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, Marina Senez, wife of Don Bertrand, Seigneur of Loyola, a small village in the province of Guipuzcoa, gave birth



to a son. In remembrance of the Blessed Virgin she chose to lie-in in a stable, and it was there that Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, came into the world.

Until he was twenty-nine years of age, the young man, possessed of an ardent imagination, lived at Court and made war. In 1521, the French having besieged Pampeluna, he rushed there, defended the town (which was forced to surrender) with the rarest valour, as all historians admit, was grievously wounded and carried back to the castle of Loyola. There, during a period of inaction for the healing of his wound, the young warrior read sacred books which brought to him, as it were, a celestial light. His thoughts changed, his soul was inspired, he was struck with the beauty of Christian virtues; his eager courage was exercised in this direction, and from that moment an enthusiasm was born within him which lasted through the whole of his earthly career.

A great obstacle confronted his passion for holy things. He loved, ardently, a noble and virtuous lady, and was beloved by her; their hearts were pure and their souls were equally beautiful. Ignatius, young, courageous, handsome, well-formed, full of noble qualities, and capable of leading to success great enterprises, went, on his recovery, to see his love, told her in words of fire of his divine vocation, and together, encouraging each other to the sublime sacrifice, they resolved to put the universe between them. Ignatius of Loyola, dedicating himself to the Blessed Virgin, started on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. No man can refuse him his admiration here. Already we see in him the lofty genius which, under the greatest obstacles, is to found an immortal institution.

These details are true; they are related by enemies who wrote about him, and they have never been refuted.

On his return from Jerusalem, recognizing that his imperfect education was not equal to the noble purpose

he had in view, he began to study in the Spanish universities. Later, he came to Paris to continue his studies, bringing with him a considerable number of books and writings composed by himself. This fact is proved, and it answers the accusation of ignorance which has been made against him.

In 1533, Ignatius was joined by his two first disciples, Pierre Lefebvre and François Xavier, and soon after by other proselytes. Wishing to fix his brave followers forever beside him, he collected, August 15, 1534, in the chapel of Montmartre, six of them; namely, Lefebvre, François Xavier, Salmeron, Lainèz, Rodriguez and Bobadilla, and there, after a mass said by Lefebvre, Ignatius Loyola unfolded his noble plan and virtually founded the Society of Jesus. They began their work by making, then and there, before heaven and beneath the safeguard of the divine will, a double vow of chastity and poverty.

Where is the man who does not admire the spectacle of these seven men, moved by a noble thought, addressing themselves to God, laying down beneath the roof of that chapel their desires, their earthly hopes, and uniting for a single purpose — that of the happiness of their fellow-beings. They devoted themselves to a perpetual work of beneficence, in which they hoped for neither property, nor power, nor enjoyment; they fastened themselves forcibly on the future; seeing nothing of life but the unseen, and contenting themselves with the inward joy of a pure conscience.

Let us pause on this picture and see it in all lights. It has not the brilliant colours of civil or military devotion; but, remembering that these founders of a society saw, and could see nothing before them but toil without reward, long journeys taken to spread the word of God, a devotion of which martyrdom was the prize, we cannot fail to recognize human energy developing its utmost

strength; and the conception seems so vast, so powerful, so firm, that we find nothing in earthly things which could be the object of such an effort. Nothing but divine power, nothing but religious conviction is capable of thus exalting the soul of man: the good promised by God is not of this world; in whatever direction we cast our eyes, we are forced to admit that the founders of this great Society were not ordinary men.

Six years after the oath of Montmartre, Pope Paul III., in spite of the resistance of the established Orders, all strongly opposed to the creation of that of the Jesuits, authorized by a bull of September 27, 1540, the institution of the Society, under the name of the Company of Jesus.

The founder had, for a long time, visited and examined the universities of the different kingdoms of Europe; and whether it was that he thought the system of education incomplete, or found that the great moral and religious ideas were lacking, or felt the want among them of the one thought, the lofty aim, he gave to his own institution the sublime mission of enlightening, not one limited portion, but the whole earth, of shedding broadcast upon it the arts, the sciences, and the noble moral ideas of Christianity.

If for a moment, in thought, we separate from the personality of Ignatius Loyola his quality as founder of the Order of Jesuits, and regard him only as a man, we recognize a great genius, a superior mind, incapable of giving birth to any but noble and great ideas. This is so true that writers like Pascal and Arnauld, who fought the Order without sparing it, never attacked its founder.

Such was the thought of this great man on observing the variability and want of unity in the educational realm of Europe. He saw that it was necessary to create amid the nations a nation (as it were) apart from all interests, in which all beings should be united in one sole thought,

while their private wills should concur in one useful and noble purpose. That purpose he decreed should be to keep alight the sacred torch of arts, sciences, and healthful moral and religious principles throughout the world. Ignatius desired to make human education tend towards perfection, and to reach this general result it was necessary to guide each human creature in the way that his individual talents called him to take. An educational body animated by an immortal spirit was alone able to execute a project which required centuries for its fulfilment. Ignatius created that body; and while he contracted, and fulfilled, the obligation to preach the word of God among all peoples, he kept his favourite thought pre-eminent in his Order. Certainly, Ignatius Loyola was a great man, and if, in antiquity, a sage had come forward with any such colossal enterprise his name would never have perished.

In 1556, Ignatius Loyola died in Rome, aged sixty-five; and though at that period there was not yet an established College in Paris — the place of his vow, the native land of his Order — he had the consolation of seeing the spread of the Company over the whole earth, civilizing India, instructing China, America, Japan, eclipsing the educational bodies of Europe, and counting a hundred established Colleges, not to mention its novitiate and professed houses, or its missions.<sup>1</sup> . . .

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Society

<sup>1</sup> Balzac goes on to give the circumstantial history of the Jesuits in France, which would be out of place here, and therefore only a few passages from it are given. It can be read in Vol. 23 of the *Édition Définitive* of his Works. It is an impartial statement as far as it goes. In defence of the aim of the Founder, of the Company's magnificent work throughout the world, Balzac speaks the truth. Being a defender he is not called upon to show how, in the long run, the lower side of human nature marred (in many and important ways) the divine side that was made in the image of God; the history of all great human effort — so far. — Tr.

formed an actual state within the bosom of all the States of Europe; consequently, it was certain to meet the fate of every institution that depends on men. Charged with the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine, it encountered the same tribulations as human justice, which, being charged with preserving the principles of civil law, the rights of men, and the rights of nations, finds the most conflicting opinions held by magistrates and legal authorities, although these opinions all issue from a single principle. This evil is inevitable, because these two sacred trusts concerning, as they do, all that is most subtle in human thought and belonging to the dearest interests of mankind — religion and private fortunes — it is impossible that controversy should not arise among their diverse interests. For this reason Pascal and Arnauld were sometimes right in their arguments. Pascal, attacking the Jesuits with the sharpest and most powerful of weapons, satire, obtained a popular success. . . .

It was under the ministry of Cardinal Mazarin that the celebrated war of Christian principles as to grace and the communion, and as to the book of Jansenius, leading to the famous bull *Unigenitus* and all that came of it, began.

Jansenius, Bishop of Yprès, was known to none, not even to the Jesuits. He wrote a book which he bequeathed to his heirs with the obligation of printing it. It appears that this book contained assertions contrary to the unity of the doctrine which the Jesuits desired to establish in Christianity. No one has ever read the book; one copy only of the original edition being referred to Pope Innocent X. That pope condemned its propositions. These propositions (which have never been found anywhere) asserted that the sacraments should not be approached except with extreme caution, especially the communion, because when a Christian once entered



a state of grace it was his duty to continue in it. This was what the Jansenists called "efficacious grace." The Jesuits, on the contrary, declared that the communion could not be received too often, and, developing this principle, they were accused of encouraging a lax view of ecclesiastical discipline by means of what was called their "sufficing grace." From this beginning it came about that the Jansenists affected the utmost rigidity of manners and morals, and were, in fact, the puritans of Christianity. Who would ever have thought that this simple discussion of a doctrine could have inflamed all France into a religious war for well-nigh a century? a war which, if it did not lead to actual combat, was not less cruel and fatal in its results. . . .

But in spite of all desire to blacken the Jesuits in public opinion, no writer has ever accused them of having solicited the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Louis XIV. was convinced that religious belief and government should go together in a state, and all historians have felt that the revocation came too evidently from the spirit of the royal government to put what there was of odium in that measure on the Jesuits. . . .

The Society has been accused of wishing to seize power and to govern Europe. As to this, I will add but one remark to what I have already said, namely: that in Spain, where the Jesuits were all-powerful in their way, they never made the slightest attempt to get possession of the Inquisition, which was the sole means of attaining to State power in that country. They left that tribunal to their enemies, the Dominicans, and contented themselves with their province of instructing youth. . . .

Another accusation has been founded on their government of Paraguay. As for that, I appeal to the sincerity of those who have read the "*Lettres Édifiantes*." Did any nobler proof ever appear in this universe that the Christian religion, faithfully observed, leads a State to

happiness? Where is the soul that has not quivered with joy and pleasure at the enchanting description of that Eden? Who does not always remember the moving scenes there consecrated; the order, the union, the regularity that reigned in those states of Paraguay? Never did men so win the love of other men. What a spectacle was that of these priests of God, forcing their way through the untrodden forests of a new world, to gather the wandering tribes, to civilize them, to show them the comforts of prayer and the celestial joys of religion. We can follow them through those forests primeval, combating wild beasts, overcoming all obstacles in the spirit of the cross. Imagination smiles upon those Fathers, leaving their robes in shreds upon the bushes, quenching their thirst in unknown brooks, feeding on roots and berries, and preaching to men by signs, understood of the heart, a religion which told them of love and concord only. The affecting sight of these men preaching in the desert, the growing villages, the communities in their cradle, are printed in our memory with heavenly freshness, like the sensations of our childhood, and we venerate in these missionaries of Paraguay both apostles and legislators. For what object did those grand, ignored men, those kind and simple Fathers, climb mountains, cross torrents, endure hunger and fatigue? Was it for gold, or for love of power? As a matter of fact the Society never derived one penny from its government of Paraguay; most of the Fathers died there without means, and without ever being able to found establishments important enough to receive a name. The happiness of the human race and the advantage of those to whom they gave a taste of the fruits of civilization were the sole object of their efforts, and whoever will read the "*Lettres Édifiantes*" will see that the Jesuits have bequeathed to the world a noble example of virtuous grandeur and have placed in the history

of the universe an episode that is consoling for humanity. . . .

It is to the Society of Jesus that we owe the supremacy of our literature. Through its collegiate institutions the Order brought about that superiority of education which has given such great geniuses to France. To comprehend this eminent service we have only to call to mind the professors, the philosophers, the learned men, the mathematicians, the historians who taught and wrote. France was covered with Jesuit colleges, and wherever they rose their pupils outdid all others. Bayle tells us that the single college of Louis-le-Grand issued from its bosom more celebrated writers than all the universities in the kingdom put together. With few exceptions, all the illustrious men of the last two centuries received their education in Jesuit colleges.

Noble and glorious have been the fruits of the thought of Ignatius Loyola. France has gathered them in every department of human knowledge — in war, diplomacy, administration, and in letters, arts, and sciences; — truly, a harvest of glory which gave to the period that elapsed from the birth of Descartes to the death of Voltaire (both Jesuit pupils) the name of the “great century;” and certainly, the tendency of the nineteenth century towards the perfecting of the sciences comes from the impulsion given to Europe by the Company.

#### [FRANCE AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF JULY.]

TO MONSIEUR L. F.

September, 1830.

On returning to Paris I supposed, from tales of travellers and newspaper articles, that I should find the streets and boulevards half destroyed and the houses full of wounded. So far from that the Royal guard has not lost a thousand men, and the city of Paris has only eight hundred of her braves to mourn. The streets have re-

sumed their usual aspect; elegant cabriolets, carriages and fashionables within them roll about as before and, except for a few trees the less here and there, the boulevards are like unto themselves. The sums collected for the wounded have been put in a bank, the wounds are cured, and all is forgotten. The government floats between "progress" and the *status quo* of the Restoration. Yesterday M. Guizot talked of political ameliorations very much as a duellist of the olden time would have talked of the hot iron which the divine judgment required him to take hold of. Do you know whence this pusillanimity of power comes? From the *senilocracy* which Louis XVIII. imposed upon us.

At first the revolution commended itself to all souls, it roused even the most slavish consciences of the period; but insensibly it is falling to the stomachs and down to the feet of all, or else it has gone to their brain. Our deputies are making quarry of power for themselves and their friends. We shall have three hundred Spartan liberals who may perhaps sup at home but will demand in the name of the country the severest laws. The late government was a woman of bad life, corrupt and corrupting, but with whom one could still laugh; the present one has all the airs of a virtuous woman, and will sell her favours dearly.

One power is rising, however, which all the other powers caress and flatter: the National guard. A veritable Utopianism! To hear some people you would think that the National guard was the all of everything — an active power, an inert force, a lever, a sedative; it will go to the frontier, it will stay at home and guard our hearths; it is the State, it is the sound of the political voice. . . . If each citizen becomes a power and transforms himself into a little constitutional janissary, what can prevent this mass, intelligent to-day, factious later, from over-awing the Chamber?

You know what some courtier wrote to a petitioner under Louis XV.: "When the king has any credit, I will let you know." Well, my dear friend, Louis Philippe is beginning to find favour. I have heard men of capacity declare that our new king is stronger than his government. He has high ideas of order; he studies his position quite otherwise than his predecessors did theirs.

We really hope to find in him a constitutional Louis XVIII., more honest than the latter, and one whose profound good sense may lead the country into ways of calmness and tranquillity.

Four very distinct parties surround this throne of yesterday: nationals, legitimists, radicals, and carlists (called *carlins*, pug-dogs, by some newspapers). The national party is divided into two factions: the progressists, who want to overthrow the senilocracy and bring to power the young and vigorous capacities that are needed by the state of the country; and the *acculards* [blind alley men, "stick-in-the-muds"] who are endeavouring to cling to all the old clothes of our government. They like their coat of many colours and band together to adjourn all questions. Both factions agree, however, in sustaining Louis Philippe; his election is a principle that is dear to them.

The second party, the legitimists, less numerous but more influential on account of its territorial possessions, denies the legality of the acts of this government and regards Henri V. as the real King of France. We are in a transitory state, they say; Henri V. is a pledge of security to the nation. Listen to the cleverest among them and you will hear the opinion expressed that Henri V. can never return without guaranteeing all the concessions granted by Louis Philippe. At the head of this party is M. de Chateaubriand, and you can safely count all the great landed proprietors in the ranks of these conscientious men. Recruited from discontent and

assembling all the material interests galled by the revolution of July, this party seems to me much the most dangerous. It is big with a battle of Culloden. It is dangerous to the present dynasty, because, under the guidance of shrewd and able men, it feels it must recognize the principles made sacred by the blood of Parisians, and because, moreover, it offers seductive guarantees of peace with the rest of Europe. The bad measures taken by the present government in relation to diplomacy and to the maintenance of magistrates have given this party many auxiliaries in the administration. There is the cloud that is going to trouble the atmosphere.

I do not speak of the imperialists, who dream of their Napoleon. They are few in number, but they represent wounded ambitions which are not treated, as I think, with sufficient consideration.

As for the radicals, they are in the greatest disfavour; and I venture to predict to you that the doctrines enunciated in the *Révolution* and the *Patriote* will never have continued course in a country so eminently one of classes as France. It must be recognized, in spite of thinkers who let their hair grow and wish to give a bit of bread to every one, that the working-classes are seeking to overturn the great social summits in order to share the governing power with them. Now the liberty of the United States of America would be odious to us at the end of two years; we should think it cold, dull, without physiognomy. The great thought which all modern institutions ought to bring to a triumph is that of restraining the class of the poor while giving it the means, according to its capacities, to rise in all ways [*de se produire*]; but also to secure the tranquillity of the upper classes. At this moment I see several very bad laws being prepared against the latter.

As to the carlists [personal partisans of Charles X.],



represented by the *Quotidienne*, to whom opposition has restored a little nerve and given a sort of vigor, they are *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*. They are idiot martyrs to their opinions. They attach themselves, naturally, to the legitimists.

You will understand from this rapid sketch the difficulties that Louis Philippe will meet in the first years of his reign. His government ought to undertake great public works wherever poverty is most felt, and bring out hidden capital by authorizing canals and giving them advantageous concessions. Louis Philippe will probably remain king not because he has known how to perceive that the question of his existence ought to be decided by young men from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age, who are now enthusiastic for his government, but because of a fact which gives him a still greater sense of security, namely: to-day all interests are wounded, and in this general disturbance all parties feel the necessity of fastening to the king for the time being. If he is an able man the time being should become the habit, the system of a year, of the future.

I have just been to see Virginie Déjazet represent Napoleon. Excellent fun! While M. Victor Hugo writes odes to the Column other men are melting it up into six-farthing pieces, so as to give a great man to his countrymen in copper coins. Napoleon in a vaudeville! degraded by the comedians of the Ambigu-Comique! That immense figure is still too near us for any one, even a man of genius, still less a vaudevillist, to focus him at a distance. But these Napoleonic representations, which attract but few persons, prove the truth of a great political maxim: that we ought to let men and things wear themselves out. There is nothing like glorification to kill a man or an idea; persecution is the life of all political and religious things; and for this

reason let the present government emancipate theatres and authors and they will die of inanition.

October, 1830.

In the midst, as we are, of commercial disasters and impending political events, I see nothing stable in Paris but the National guard. On all sides blue and red uniforms, pompons, aigrettes, shakos, spurs, sabres. Everywhere is written the triumph of General La Fayette [Commander of the National guard].

I am, as you know, his sincere admirer. His life is a noble life; it is more than a man's life, it is the history of two countries. His name alone relates the tale of four immense revolutions: America, 1789, 1815, 1830. As a political character, he has never contradicted himself; he is a man of antique simplicity. I love him because I love my country and he represents its aspirations. I love him because he is great and noble; and also because Washington confided to him his sword. But I do not forget that once upon a time I had to break lances for my idol. He was placed by the aristocracy under a grave accusation; they represented him as possessed of a *fixed idea* in the formation of the National guard. I think with him; I believe that institution is the security of the soil; more than that, it is the soil itself armed to maintain order. But that idea, his dream for forty years, is it not a peril in his own life?

La Fayette, if he had been counselled by wise friends, would have only lent the support of his name to the "glorious July days;" only organized his citizen guard and reviewed it once to salute the triumph of his idea. Then, patriarch of the Revolution, wrapping himself in his glory, he ought to have retired to the Chamber of peers, leaving his son to continue his great name in the tribune. Had he done so he would have made himself immortal ten years the sooner. As it is, I fear that

some day, like Necker, his soldiers will pass before him with indifference and salute him as a relic. Men ought to know, like some heroic souls, how to go to heaven at the right time. It is given to none but great geniuses to die at Saint Helena.

In the elective Chamber there are not more than five or six young deputies; but to compensate for the niggardliness with which the departments have sent us youth, a man of great popularity, M. Laffitte, now become prime minister, has suddenly made a young writer into a sort of semi-minister. M. Thiers, formerly editor of the *Constitutionnel* and the *National* is to be intrusted, apparently, with our finances. This young statesman was incubated, hatched, and has grown up and written under the influence of the salons of M. de Talleyrand; but we all know men who have kept their virtue while frequenting women who have none. I am, moreover, convinced that M. Thiers is still too young to make his ministry a speculation. We have in the first lines of his "History of the Revolution" eloquent sentences on the disinterestedness of the Conventionnels who handled millions and dined for thirty sous. Those lines, formerly quoted in the *Constitutionnel* become to-day his profession of faith. If M. Thiers has talent he may be allowed to laugh at us in his sleeve like M. de Talleyrand; but he must have talent; if he has not, he loses more than other men, because he has had himself too loudly *announced* not to go to the bottom, he and his future.

I venture to own that I have confidence in him; he is, from all that I hear and know, a young man of great capacity. Let us hope, therefore, that M. Thiers will have genius for M. Laffitte, and M. Laffitte popularity for M. Thiers; while M. de Montalivet can lend to MM. Thiers and Laffitte, without interest, the activity of his

youth; so that if we cannot have a man of genius in one volume we shall have him in three little duodecimos — a sort of republication of Necker, minus Madame de Staël.

My dear friend, we are in the most detestable of situations: We await events, we await good laws, we await a vengeance, we await pleasure, we await a Chamber, a Court, a government, a literature, legislation, credit, and great men. *Pardieu!* the Pantheon is open and we are at a loss how to fill it. If the departments do not send us a young Pitt, a Cardinal de Richelieu of liberty, a quarter of a Napoleon, I don't know what will become of the present ministry in presence of a mass as alarmingly intelligent as ours, bold to criticise, intolerant of a curb, self-willed, capricious, and paupers in money. I meet in the streets a crowd of young men in literature and politics who represent the sum of human progress; they are hampered by the men of talent of the past age. Where is he who will conduct that progress beyond its present degree? One thing is certain: that man, whoever he is, will not be a man of forty. He will be twenty-four, possibly twenty-two, and he will not be a talker, nor a *globiste*, nor a bureaucrat. Adieu!

TO MADAME CARRAUD.

November, 1830.

Again I regret to tell you that I cannot go to-morrow to Saint-Cyr. I had nursed that dear hope all the week, and to-day comes a notice of a meeting of shareholders for an affair in which I represent an interest belonging to my mother. It is one of the pieces of property I ceded to her, a feeble "on account" of the sums she has sacrificed to keep my name intact; and it would be very bad grace in me not to set aside any pleasure of my own when she is concerned; it would be ingratitude.

Also, at this moment, in order to live and help certain friends even more unfortunate than myself, I am obliged to make untold efforts. I work night and day; sleeping

scarcely more than two hours. I have to finish, by Saturday, a long article for the *Revue de Paris*, and the usual one for the *Mode*, with which I am belated. Forgive me, therefore, with your usual kindness, for thus putting off the pleasure of seeing you. The necessity must be very imperious, because M. Borget and I were anxious to consult you about our affair and try to bring you round to it. But if agreeable to you we will certainly arrange to come some day next week.

The country is entering into very serious circumstances. I am alarmed at the struggle I see preparing. I see (this is between ourselves) passion everywhere and reason nowhere. If France is convulsed I shall not, whatever certain friends may say, be among those who refuse her their arms and their talents. Then will be the time when science, the resources of which we have carried so far, and courage will help France to triumph. But what will be the upshot of it all? Shall we be masters of the revolt of irritated interests which are now within our body politic? Ah! madame, the number of those patriots to whom the word country signifies nothing is very great. None are willing to unite on the moderate principles, the constitutive principles I have already pointed out to you. We are between the ultras of liberalism and of legitimacy, who will unite only in overthrowing all.

Do not accuse me of non-patriotism because my intelligence obliges me to take the exact measure of men and things. Governmental genius consists in effecting the fusion of extremes; that is what two men of talent, Napoleon and Louis XVIII., did. One was never understood, the other was understood by himself only. Both restrained all parties in France, one by force, the other by craft, because one rode on horseback, the other was driven in a carriage. To-day, for our misfortune we have a government without a policy. This state

of things is ruin to us; from me it is taking some hope or other daily. Do you suppose, therefore, that I am not for the consolidation of things! Oh! if you were in Paris, in the midst of men and public affairs, your *solitude politics* would soon change. You would not be here one minute without being galled.

December, 1830.

I have received your letter, madame, and, scolding as it is, it gives me pleasure because it shows the interest you take in me. Without attempting to show you how little generous it is to judge of an edifice by one stone, and to blame me for a single opinion which must be expressed in a manner to suit the subscribers to a paper, I assure you that my "Lettres sur Paris" tell, above all things, the truth as to men and things; they are intended less to represent an opinion than to give an exact picture of the political movement and ideas which are struggling here now.

Aside from the necessity of sketching that picture, certain thoughts which were derived from the ministers and the men who are carrying on the government had to be given. If you think that I spoke wholly for myself you are mistaken; the very men whom you want to see in the government spoke through me. This or that thought or phrase was derived from men of influence. I frankly own that I do not see how a representative government can be accepted without also accepting the struggle of opinions which it involves. The tempest that is blowing to-day will always blow. You are mistaking the natural action of the government for evils of government.

Your remark as to usurpation is very singular! The strongest heads in the *National*, the *Globe*, and the *Temps* all say that if the Duc de Broglie did not exist, he would have to be invented. But without defending the



ideas I have already expressed, let me tell you in a few words the system of government to which my whole being subscribes. It is a profession of faith as unalterable as possible; in a word, it is my political conscience, my plan, my thought, for which I have a right to the same respect that I myself give to the opinions of others. My political life will be entirely devoted to the triumph of this thought, to its development; and when I speak seriously about the future of my country there is neither word nor writing of mine that is not connected with these principles. [At this time his name was up for election to the Chamber of Deputies at Angoulême and also at Cambrai.]

France ought to be a constitutional monarchy; it should have an hereditary royal family, a Chamber of peers of real power to represent landed property, with all possible guarantees of heredity, and with privileges, the nature of which ought to be discussed. Next, a second Chamber, elective, and representing the interests of the middle classes which stand between the upper social positions and what is called "the people."

The body of the laws and the spirit of them ought to tend towards the enlightenment, *as much as possible*, of the people, that is, persons who own nothing, workmen, proletaries, etc., in order to bring as many of them as possible to the ease of life and competence of the middle classes. But the people ought always to remain under a powerful control, in such a way that its members may find light, aid, and protection, and that no ideas, no combinations, no intrigues can render it turbulent.

The greatest liberty possible should be given to the well-to-do classes, for they have something to preserve, and all to lose; they can never become lawless. To the government, as much strength as possible. Thus the government, the rich, and the bourgeois have an interest in rendering the lowest class happy and in elevating the

middle class, in which lies the true power of all States. If the rich men, the hereditary occupants of the upper Chamber, corrupted in morals, engender abuses, such abuses are inseparable from the existence of society itself; they must be accepted with their accompanying advantages.

That is my plan, my thought. It unites the good and philanthropic conditions of several systems. People may laugh at me and call me liberal or an aristocrat, I shall not give up my system. I have meditated long and profoundly on the institutions of society; this of mine seems to me, I do not say the best, but the least defective.

Time and space fail me to develop more fully my ideas, which are only sketched here. As for my political conduct, have faith that I shall always act under the inspiration of a lofty and stern sense of right, and, in spite of M. Carraud's anathema against journalists, believe me, I shall neither write nor act except from conviction. My plan and my political life cannot be appreciated in a moment. If I ever have a part in the government of this country I shall be judged in after days; I fear nothing; but I cling more to the esteem of a few persons (among whom you are in the front rank, as one of the finest intellects and loftiest souls I have ever known) than I do to the esteem of the masses, for which, to tell the truth, I have a sovereign contempt. There are vocations which one has to obey; and something irresistibly impels me to seek fame and power. It is not a happy life. I have within me a worship of womanhood and a need of love which has never been completely satisfied; despairing of being ever loved and understood by the woman of my dreams, having never met her except in one way, that of the heart, I fling myself into the tempestuous zone of political passions, and into the lurid, parching atmosphere of literary ambition.

I may fail in both; but I want you to believe that if I seek to live the life of the age, instead of passing through it obscure and happy, it is precisely because a pure and unpretending happiness is lacking to me. When one has one's whole way to make, it is better to make it great and illustrious; pain for pain, it is preferable to suffer in a high sphere than a low one, and I much prefer dagger-thrusts to pin-pricks.

December, 1830.

MY DEAR L——, — There never was a time when it was easier to establish a governing machine than the present. Every morning at his waking a minister receives from twenty different newspapers the sum of all opinions. The intelligent press takes the place of the bronze jaws from which the Venetian senate used to get its wisdom. Formerly a statesman did not venture to act without submitting his projects to the serious discussion of his subordinates; the newspapers discuss now, and the newspapers represent, under pain of losing subscribers, the opinions of the masses, expressed by first-class men. Observe, moreover, that the minister, possessing State secrets, has an immense advantage over journalism, for he knows when the newspapers are mistaken, while they, when they are right, often do not know it. Nothing is needed, my dear friend, but good sense and a consultation of the interests of the country in order to be very well governed in a very few days.

What is there externally to alarm us? M. de Metternich is struggling against death and Italy — Italy is young and he is old; Holland is fighting Belgium, which is making ready to avenge incendiarism by inundation (they are two countries armed with fire and water); England is just now pressed between a pauper population, ruined farmers, an aristocracy gone to sleep, and Ireland waking up; Russia is a prey to cholera-morbus and has

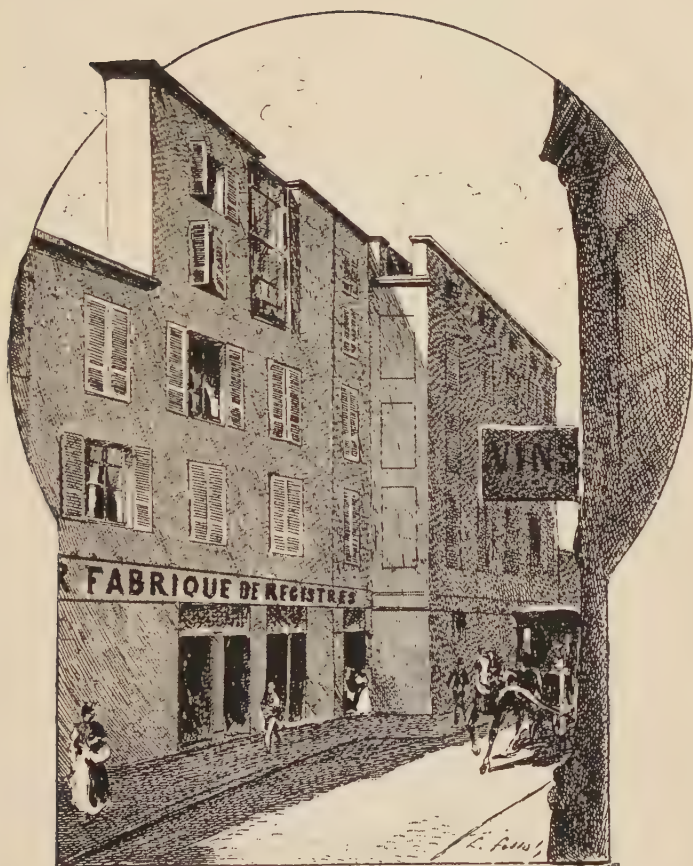
her head full of the Orient; Spain has n't enough soldiers for herself; if she throws eighty thousand of them across the Pyrenees she inoculates herself with liberty. . . .

But we have a ministry which I do not hesitate to qualify (two men and M. Thiers, under-secretary, excepted) as the weakest of all those imposed upon us for the last fifteen years. None of these men are able to see that the government should consolidate itself by the very means that created it, namely: youth, journalism, and the complete triumph of liberal ideas. If the present organization marches at all, it is by means of that wonderful power, the *good will* of the citizens. The National guard having now instituted themselves in power, we have a real security for the future.

*Haus zehere B. La. H. e. l. R. u. M. r. u. s. Saint Germain.*









## II.

### HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL.

*France after the Revolution of July, continued. Arts and Literature. Opinions of my grocer. Political indecision of Louis Philippe's rule. A lesson for France. Saint-Simonism and Fourier. Anecdotes of Louis Philippe and Napoleon. The life of a Woman.*

[FRANCE AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF JULY, *continued.*]

To M. D——, at Rouen.

December 30, 1830.

At the close of a year so fertile in events do you not feel, as I do, the need of summing up accomplished facts and their causes in order to create, as it were, a future; to foresee what will be by the aspect of what has been? Let us put Paris and France out of our minds and cast a retrospective glance over Europe; let us drop our present sympathies and our day-old hatreds, and try to put ourselves for a moment as far as we can from *contemporaneousness*, and seat ourselves as centenarians on the hearths of our descendants and converse there.

At the beginning of this year Europe was under the yoke of three men, two words, and one system. Three men: M. de Polignac, M. de Metternich, and Wellington. Two ideas: *priesthood* and *legitimacy*. One system: the Holy Alliance. Of the three men, two have fallen, the third still reigns; the two words no longer express anything; and the Holy Alliance is broken up.

Such is the metaphysical history of this great year.

Now let us look for the key of this social enigma, and see if the European family has made any progress.

Individually three men are nothing, but they take on gigantic proportions as soon as they represent interests, ideas, systems, peoples, or forces. Robespierre and Danton are immense because they transfigure, to the eyes of historians, the vengeance of the Gauls, oppressed for nine centuries; Sylla is the Roman aristocracy; Marius the people; Richelieu is the formula of royalty; Montmorency of feudal institutions; Catherine de' Medici a grand image of Christianity and kingship; Coligny of republicanism and deism. Let us examine, therefore, what these three European men stand for, of forces and interests. To estimate them thoroughly we must analyze, in few words, the events which produced them on the world's stage.

In 1789, at the powerful voice of Mirabeau the struggle which exists in all society between those who possess and those who have nothing, between the privileged and the proletaries, awoke with a fury unprecedented. The storm overflowed the whole earth. But when the torrents were at some distance from their source, a man arose and grasped the storm to attempt to re-establish order and reconstitute society. The destiny of a strong man is despotism. It is impossible for him whose hand is fit to govern nations to quit his lofty sphere and become a monk like Charles the Fifth — a small soul!

Napoleon, having placed the struggle elsewhere, or rather, perhaps, having stood for a future which he alone saw, was abandoned by the people to whom he had wished to bequeath the empire of the commercial world and the monopoly of civilization.

The sovereigns who made themselves agents of the French Revolution to overturn the man who represented despotism had the secret intention of becoming the heirs of their victim. Peoples, kingdoms, men became, as it were, to their minds, quarry. The sovereigns looked with jealous eye on the thrones manufactured by

Napoleon. Then came the Congress of Vienna; European aristocracy rushed there, summoning to its saturnalia of force all mitres and all crowns. After a struggle of twenty years the continental oligarchy triumphed. Quick to understand the necessity under which it stood to secure the victory of the two principles on which it was based—catholicism and absolute monarchy, *una fides, unus dominus*—it created a system, the HOLY ALLIANCE! M. de Metternich's idea.

Let us own it: the system was gigantic, as much so, perhaps, as the continental system itself. It was the solidarity of kings against the peoples; just as the other was the solidarity of nations against the naval tyranny of England: a vast coalition against a danger. Napoleon's idea needed to be understood by twenty oppressed peoples; M. de Metternich's idea pre-existed in the understanding of all princes; it was the hope of England, eager to befool continental industry and to sow discord—it was, in short, the last plank of European aristocracy.

At the Congress of Vienna the question was the same between peoples and kings as it had been between Sylla and Marius, between Catherine and Coligny. M. de Metternich, a species of owl with eagle eyes, saw but two cockades: that of the rich, that of the poor; two systems: hierarchy and force, or discussion and anarchy; two governments: despotism in right and independence in fact, or liberty in principle and servitude in reality; a king and peace, or a nation and turbulence; a people to produce and the great to spend. The European family required, according to him, luxury, enjoyment; and he made himself the mouthpiece of all who possessed; believing that on the subjection of the poor depended the tranquillity of the rich. Organ of the aristocracy, he wanted a blind hierarchy, a potent contract; he thought like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke, who,

being consulted as to forms of government, pointed to monarchy as the best.

Legitimacy of thrones sanctioned by religion, guaranteed by all cabinets; wars rendered impossible because disputes were to be submitted to an areopagus; hence a long and productive peace; such were the ideas of which M. de Metternich made himself the representative. To gather the fruit of them for the nations of Old Europe it was necessary to proclaim in principle the abolition of legislative discussions and the muzzling of written words. Hence the system of the Holy Alliance, the two words: *legitimacy, catholicism*, and three men: Metternich, Wellington, and Polignac.

These names were, in each country, predestined to represent there the system, ideas, and interests of the aristocracy; but as in France it was necessary to reinstate the Bourbons under a national label, and as they were impossible unless with a charter, the European diplomats selected the cleverest among themselves to develop in France a succession of men and acts which should insensibly lead up to the final expression of their system, to a name representing oligarchy.

No matter whether M. de Polignac was individually a man of genius or a fool, he was, as a matter of fact, the incarnation of the Holy Alliance, a vast formula, a complete system. Hence his conviction, his obstinacy and that of Charles X. We give them odious epithets because they were the apostles and martyrs of a religion contrary to our own; imitating in this respect the followers of Calvin against the catholics, and the catholics against the Religion. Without, however, going so far back, we find the *montagnard* refugees in Brussels accusing their companions in exile, the Girondins, of being "old rascals," and declaring that they ought to be distrusted.

Seldom are we sufficiently sincere in times of great



political oscillations to examine theoretically both men and things. I risk being taxed with aristocracy, carlism [Charles X.], bordelism [Henri V., Duc de Bordeaux], absolutism in thus magnifying to you the *question judged* during the last week by the Court of Peers. But my profession of faith will put an end to all false accusation: During the Revolution I would have died with the Girondins; desiring like them a constitution which should give guarantees to the people, and a king to give unity and force to the government.

So, if you are willing to judge of the future by the past, do you not see that the men of to-day are the men of yesterday, barring their coats, language, and manners? Is not the mass of them very much what it was in the days of Pericles, Augustus and Louis XIV.? Do we not see the same vices, the same virtues, the same errors, the same ideas couched in different words? If you will conceive of a system which, indifferent to the duration of struggles, has triumphed under Augustus, Constantine, Charlemagne, Catherine, Louis XIV., Napoleon, in spite of the great revolts led by Brutus, Jesus Christ, Jean Sans-Peur, Luther, Cromwell, Descartes, Mirabeau, Danton and La Fayette—all of whom have borne at different epochs the banner of reformers—you will, I say, admit that this system will not let itself be put about by the trumpety commotion of our July days.

What men have arisen to sustain this revolution, already threatened in France by two very considerable parties: the bordelists and the bonapartists? Where are the popular giants, champions of democracy, who ought to be making ready to struggle against the Machiavellian senators of St. Petersburg, against M. de Metternich and English toryism, all as powerful by intrigue, diplomacy and corruption as Napoleon was by his cannon and his genius? Where is the young head daring enough to accept the heritage of the Convention and to preach a

political Gospel of which the agrarian law must be to-day the first clause?

Either, not an absolute monarch, or not a deliberative assembly. That is the maxim of the two principles which are warring for modern society: imperishable principles! for aristocracy will no more die than republicanism: millions of possessors must be killed, or millions of proletaries brutified to produce the triumph of one or the other. It is under the burden of these two diverse portions of mankind that our human demigods have staggered; those powerful beings whose seat is on the confines of earth and heaven.

The moral combat of those two elements is eternal as Nature herself, and we are no doubt destined never to know where is the right, and where the wrong. The universe, however, goes on and appears before us daily. Philosophers will tell us, comparing Nature to society, that the best government is that which, opposing the two systems to one another, is able to leave results undecided, while exciting both to a perpetual production which will be to the profit of the people.

But let us drop that theory, disdained by all parties because it fosters no passion, and return to the European situation.

While France amuses herself by considering the manœuvres of a few old grannies brought from the museums of the Empire or the Restoration—historical skeletons now performing their last genuflections; while able men are making us play at National Guard and parade in the streets to ward off imaginary dangers; while the public mind is occupied at points where it ought not to be, the Holy Alliance consult together and, little disturbed by threats of national uprisings against a foreign enemy or by congresses without money, leaders or troops, the Holy Alliance is fomenting discords in the bosom of the populations now without unity, without

fixity, without settled will of any kind, which may indeed pour like a torrent over Europe, but will there be lost among the reefs — like the crusades, the jacqueries, the pragueries of other days. The aristocratic system has, under all steeples and all roofs, spies, agents, soldiers, men and women, who excite and foster hatreds, desires, self-love and selfish interests to its profit; little scrupulous in its sub-alliances, it is sometimes for movement, sometimes for passive resistance. Charles X., the Duc de Bordeaux, the Duc de Reichstadt are the pawns of its game.

Do you remember the strange predilection which Berryer always showed for Napoleon's son? Well, if we can believe certain persons, the legitimacy of that young man is a doctrine agreed to by the Court at Holyrood [Charles X. in exile]. Only yesterday, the "*Tribune*," interpreting the silence of the *Moniteur*, inferred that "the partizans who have proclaimed Napoleon II. in Corsica were *obtaining a success*." These rumours coincide curiously with a diplomatic anecdote for which I will not vouch; General Maison can verify it for you in Vienna:—

It is said that an emissary of Charles X. has had long conferences with M. de Metternich and has induced him to consent to send Napoleon II. into France as a brand of discord, putting the grandson of his master between the revolution of July and Austria, just as in other days he put into the father's bed an Austrian archduchess to ransom the empire.

You know that the Duc de Reichstadt has received a most ascetic education, and that under the direction of the political Mephistopheles who directs the ways of European Courts, the son of the great captain has become, I will not say stupid, but negative; a species of Joash, destined to the royal purple under a sort of moral castration.

Can you not see the old diplomatist leaving his cabinet, with his soul, cold though it be, warmed by that satanic scheme, as he enters the apartment of his victim? He feels an undefinable shock in contemplating the indifference of that feeble creature. That is his work. The son of the greatest man of modern times is an Augustulus, playing at dice, all-unknowing that he is emperor. The diplomatist makes himself a child to play with the child and sound his soul; but the soul is nerveless and effeminate. Metternich is frightened at the success of the education by which he has extinguished everything in the brain of that youth in whom his craft had pictured armies and civil wars. The father had made the glory of France, the son was to bring about its ruin and degradation.

The old minister did not hesitate. He revealed to that youth, apparently without force of any kind, his destiny. He spread before him the grandest inheritance of glory that ever a father bequeathed to his son. He spoke to him of the sheaves of laurel on which he was cradled. He told of Lodi, Jaffa, Marengo, of Wagram even! He uttered the name: NAPOLEON! He found words in which to paint that French Empire which he himself had overturned! And then, he hailed him Emperor! He seated him upon that eagle, that terrible eagle that had soared above the universe. He unrolled at his feet the plains of France. To that orphaned creature he promised millions of friends, millions of devoted soldiers. He opened to him the Tuileries, and told him how, proscribed and without arms, a little switch in his hand, his father, Napoleon the Great, had in twenty days reconquered his empire by merely showing himself, just as now, at sight of his son, the great imperial eagle would fly from steeple to steeple, while from beneath thatched roofs the soldiers, young and old, and the toilers of that vast empire would once more cry "Napoleon!" as they said "My God!"

At the aspect of that glory, at the words that proclaimed him emperor, as he listened to the quiver of armies, and divined a battlefield, instinct awoke in that Napoleon-heart! The father spoke; the great French Empire rose like a flame; the eagle spread his wings, and the lad, dazzled, but too feeble for the burden, gave a cry of enthusiasm: "FRANCE!" — and fell swooning on the ground.

In presence of that old genii who sent the son-in-law of his master to die beneath the ignoble rule of Hudson Lowe, who governs Europe, rules Northern hordes and can unchain upon us carlists and bonapartists — in short, face to face with that colossus of pettiness and intrigue, put our vacillating government, patrolling Paris, and you will see our danger. We need a young Talleyrand to overthrow Metternich in Vienna just as our old Don Juan did Wellington in London.

The anecdote I have just told you was caught on the wing by two writers who have scored an immense success with it at the "Nouveautés" under the title of "The Son of the Man." But they have cleverly turned the danger of the drama (which drew tears from the actors as well as from the audience) to the profit of Louis Philippe.

[ARTS AND LITERATURE.]

January 9, 1831.

I promised in my last letter that I would give you a brief sketch to show the condition of arts and literature in France during the year 1830. But alas! a year is a very short time for any progress of the human reason. It is not here as it is in politics, where the slightest event changes the face of things and suddenly transforms an insignificant period into an original age. In the vast field of intellect the facts are ideas; and by some inexplicable phenomenon it has always been easier for men to bestir themselves, assemble in battalions, get them-

selves killed, and put their kings on or off a throne, than to produce an intellectual conception; revolutions want noise and movement; but thought wants silence and peace. . . .

In the matter of scientific knowledge and progress during the year we have suppressed the "*Journal des Savants*," and added three or four hundred millions to our liabilities; but some publicists pretend that the debt of nations proves their wealth; if so, we shall soon be opulent — like graves getting deeper as you dig them.

If you ask me what books have appeared during the year I own I shall be puzzled to tell you. It is difficult to distinguish objects in the kaleidoscope of 1830. M. de Musset has given great hopes, and has put himself at a bound in the midst of the old imperial reputations, which he does not give himself the trouble to salute. You have read, no doubt, his "*Confession*." That book, the first thought of which is bold, lacks daring in the execution. Charles Nodier has published his "*Histoire du Roi de Bohême*," a delightful literary squib, very disdainful and satirical — the satire of a *blasé* old man who perceives at the end of his days the dreadful void hidden beneath all knowledge and literature. The book belongs to the *school of disenchantment*. It is a curious deduction from the "*Âne Morté*;" singular coincidence of work. The year, which began with the "*Physiologie du Mariage*," about which you will permit me not to say much, has ended with "*Le Rouge et le Noir*," a conception of cold and sinister philosophy. It is one of those pictures which every one, out of prudery, or self-interest, perhaps, blames as being false. In these four conceptions lies the literary genius of the epoch; in them is the cadaverous odour of a dead society. The anonymous author of the "*Physiologie*" takes pleasure in stripping away our illusions as to marriage, that first good of all societies. De Musset's "*Confession*"



completes the book of M. de Lamennais, and declares that religion and atheism are both dead, killed by each other, and there is no consolation for the honest man who wants to commit a crime. Nodier arrives, casts a glance upon our city, our laws, our knowledge, and says, with a ringing laugh, "Knowledge! nonsense! what good does that do me?" and he sends the Bourbons to die in a stable in the shape of an old aristocratic mare. Then, in December, M. de Stendhal tears away the last shred of humanity, of human belief that remains to us, and tries to prove that *gratitude* is only a word like Love, God, Monarch. Those four books are the rendering of the inward thought of an aged people, preceding a young organization. They are all piercing satires, and the last is the laugh of a devil delighted to find in every man an abyss of selfishness in which all benefits are swamped. A man may arise, perhaps, who, in a single work, will sum up these four ideas, and the nineteenth century will then have a terrible Rabelais, who will attack liberty as Stendhal has now attacked the human heart.

As for other writers, let us not deceive ourselves. The men who were on the stage before the events of July are the older by a dozen years. They must find a new baptism in new hopes, for old things are passed away. . . .

When the political horizon clears our authors will be ready to cast their spawn. Meanwhile, literature awaits a public.

Music is not more fortunate. "Fra Diavolo" is a long Pont Neuf, and except "La Parisienne," which Rossini says is the great cavatina of the epoch, nothing has this year fulfilled the promise of the past.

As for art, it can have no physiognomy at all between a throne that has crumbled away and a rising dynasty. Its outlook is sad. It execrates the bourgeois and will not allow itself to be weighed in shop scales against a National guard.

## [OPINIONS OF MY GROCER.]

April, 1831.

I have an immense reverence for grocers, men of integrity, who weigh in their cinnamon scales with equal intelligence the merits of a speech in the Chamber or one of Taglioni's pirouettes.

Consequently, yesterday morning, when I was torn from poetic reveries by my particular grocer, who came to borrow an advance on the sum I owe him for a few pounds of candles, I brought him round to the situation of things: I wanted to know the opinion of him from whom I get my lights.

His reasoning was simple and clear.

He cursed the stagnation of business, the superfluity of population; every day, he said, saw a new grocery opened; competition crushed a man; before long all Parisians would become grocers, and where then would be the consumers?

Believing that I understood him I talked of the great remedy, much the fash'ion at the present time because it is a problem — I mean, war.

At that idea, the grocer screamed out louder than if I had proposed a reduction of five per cent on his bill. His second reasoning was even more simple and clearer than the first.

He cursed war, because while citizens dine on musketry and sup on cannon-balls, mocha, sugar, and vanilla stay on the shelves, and the grocer, inactive, is reduced to the disastrous role of figurehead to his own counter.

That time I pretended to sympathize, and asked my grocer what he thought the best form of government to remedy these double evils.

With all the self-confidence of a man who does up parcels, the grocer demanded a Republic, without war and without privileges, in which all citizens shall be perfectly equal and absolutely free — except to become grocers.

## [POLITICAL INDECISION OF LOUIS PHILIPPE'S RULE.]

To M. D——, at Rouen.

March 18, 1831.

Political indecision is not at an end in spite of the recasting of the ministry; and perhaps the continuation of this singular system is due to the possible fact that the change in the names of the men has not changed the general principles of the cabinet. I own there is nothing queerer than to see M. Laffitte giving up his portfolio and M. Sébastiani keeping his; M. Mérilhon resigning and M. de Montalivet stranded in the ministry of Public Instruction. Are we to take that appointment as an epigram?

If this rotation of statesmen be kept up actively at the heart of our constitutional monarchy tempered by riots, I don't despair of getting, some day, to a tolerably good ministerial mosaic. We proceed by aggregations; we study affinities, governmental and legislative. It is chemistry applied to politics. M. Odilon Barrot knows a good deal by this time of the theory of reactives; still, as a result of treating us in this way, I am half afraid that France will be, some day or other, the victim of these wearisome experiments.

As for the immediate present, we have no reason to complain of the new elements brought out by the last operation.

To the name of Maréchal Soult is now added that of M. de Rigny. Sooner or later he was certain to be at the head of our navy. He is as necessary to the squadrons as Maréchal Soult is to the regiments. Besides, the vice-admiral will be a useful help in the Council. Take him altogether, he is a man of diplomatic shrewdness as well as a special man. He knows the continental chess-board as well as he knows the reefs in the sea, and if he had entered the ministry some months earlier our diplomacy would have been less clumsy.

If M. d'Argout had been put in the Finances, I might have had a grain of incense to offer him, but I think him singularly out of place in his half of a ministry. And, apropos of this odd division of a ministry, cut in two like an apple with such marvellous ease, I hope that we are not to have both a minister of Public Works and a Director-general of Bridges and Highways. As for the other ministers, not excepting the new president of the council, it is almost praise not to speak of them. M. Casimir Perier will be used up even sooner perhaps than M. Laffitte. His antecedents show many obscurities. Under Charles X. he was, like his colleague M. Sébastiani, one of those liberals who, resembling asymptotes in geometry, approach a portfolio but never touch it—a species of political Tantalus. I do not think that M. Casimir Perier will be cordially supported by the surroundings of which I spoke to you lately, and which are always acting in the Palais-Royal on the action of the government. The intrigues which have deprived France of Belgium are connected, it is said, with M. Casimir Perier. His ministry is a transition to an order of unknown things.

I think I can prophesy already new combinations. MM. Soult, de Rigny and d'Argout will probably be the strength of the new cabinet. Does not M. le Baron Louis seem like a personage in some fantastic tale? He pops up and down in the ministerial fish-pond in virtue of unknown laws which regulate the specific weight of governmental bodies. I thought these ancient Longchamps (worthy of the Restoration) were quite discredited, but it seems that nomadic ministers have something in their gait and bearing which makes them valuable to a government: The charger trained to the life and step of the squadron has a value of its own. The stigmata of reform do not “take” upon ministerial heads; consequently, I shall not be surprised to see M. Guizot taking

back the portfolio of M. de Montalivet, and the latter rewarded for his gigantic labours by some embassy. He has so finely represented youth in the government!

While riots are lacking in Paris, revolutions are happening in foreign parts. Cadiz has declared independence. The European drama increases in grandeur and interest at every moment; there never was an epoch so accommodating to those who like eccentricity of life, noise, and movement. Here is Russia fighting Poland, and the Poles getting the best of it. Austria and Italy are beginning a death-struggle. England is eaten by a cancer. Belgium is about to bite Holland. Is our fine egoism, worthy of the palmy days of British policy, to prove the best for us after all? Yes, if parliamentary reform is adopted; for this bill of Lord John Russell is the sentence of the British government. Catholic emancipation, reform, and pauperism are the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, of the prosperity of that selfish and exclusive people. If anything could give strength and unity to that singular government it would surely have been the facility with which Toryism might have elected a House of Commons devoted to clearly-formed plans for the prosperity of the country, which the leading minds of that monstrous oligarchy ought to have known how to espouse in time. The corruption of Parliament was a natural counterpoise to the English press, a pillow on which the ministers went to sleep. Power has to be a long time in the same hands before a nation can walk steadily in the path of fortune; and if history were worth anything, men could read in it that frequent oscillations are closely allied to national misfortunes. Does a change of ministry come from a crisis, or a crisis from a change of ministry? That's a question some professor of history may some day elucidate when it becomes the fashion to study historical problems, instead of writing and preaching romances about them.

The most extraordinary miracle that surprises me at this moment in Paris is one that Paganini has managed to perform. Do not think I mean by his bow, or his fingering, or the wonderful fantastic sounds of his violin. No doubt there is something mysterious in those; but, although I bless him, admire him, and attend every concert, it is not merely to satisfy my selfish passion, my artistic fanaticism, it is not to climb my own steeple, like the bell-ringer of Notre-Dame, but from patriotism; to convince myself, when I see the Opera-house gorged with people and twenty-thousand francs in the cash-box, that the word *poverty* is a joke, and that money is abundant. Certainly I don't think those listening ears belong to famished stomachs. And if not, the animal named Capitalist must be attacked by some peculiar malady the symptoms of which are not properly studied by our statesmen. How is it that a hundred thousand francs of ticket money is assured to Mlle. Taglioni, whether she dances on her head or her heels, while we refuse them to commerce, to industry, to the State, to a canal even, though they offer enormous interest and full security? Why this queer contradiction? Probably because our ministers are not ambidextrous; none of them have known how to seize the public. Paganini seems to me the Napoleon of art, but we have no political Paganini — and not for want of violins, notes, bows, orchestra!

The ministry ought now to explain itself; but by acts — words signify nothing now in politics. M. Casimir Perier has a fine chance, namely: *ennui*. We are so weary of the flux and reflux of power to no end that we pass in front of the ministries as if before hospitals. — Hospitals! Are there not physicians and patients, sufferings, political diseases and wounds to heal elsewhere?

Adieu; my next letter may have something definite to say; perhaps the times are big with some event which



will change the whole face of affairs. Never was there an epoch so favourable for prophets: peoples are stirring, popes are dying, protocols drafting, ministers are coming and going in a manner to justify the prediction of any fantastic thing.

[A LESSON FOR FRANCE.]

To the same.

April, 1831.

In one of my earlier letters I wrote you that the government of Louis Philippe would reproduce *in the name of liberty* the same questions so energetically put forth by the government of Charles X. *in the king's name*. You must own now that my prediction is realized.

Formerly the liberal opposition stigmatized M. de Villèle, spit upon him, vilified him, because he required the employés of the government to *think* like the government; he would not let his government be attacked from within by copying servilely the Restoration. The liberal opposition, now in power in the person of M. Casimir Perier, has just issued circulars to all its employés to think as *it* does.

Charles X. told his soldiers to fire on the people because he thought his government in danger of destruction. Our ministers have just brought in a pretty little bill against mobs in the street, and, quite recently, it was a question of dispersing a riot by force, after a "respectful summons" legally made. Between the two forms of fusillard there seemed to be only the difference of a commissary of police.

The journalists overturned Charles X. because he was trying to kill the press; and the ministerial journals are even now beginning to warn us that in case of war the liberty of the press must be suspended in view of public interests. . . . What should we have said of the despotic government if it had asked us for three hundred

millions to make war for the honour of France, and then have spent the three hundred millions without making war, while the supplies and purchases of the ministry of war cost fifty per cent more than usual for mere hypothetical urgency?

The Restoration cost us three thousand millions; the great July week has already cost us nearly five hundred millions, and at the rate the ministry of finance and discredit is going, I am not sure that liberty won't cost us dearer, some day, than legitimacy.

Does there not result a great lesson for France from her history of the last six months? We have been in a turmoil to displace power, but power has not changed. Its doctrines are the same. It is selfish power, thinking only of itself; keeping still the false system of see-saw and leading the present revolution towards the abyss of indifference which swallowed up the Restoration. Whether M. Casimir Perier, M. Villèle, or M. de Polignac reign, the solid part of the nation, which toils, labours, does not read, heaps up sou by sou the independence of its old age, will none the less arraign the government before the bar of its own savings. Taxes greater or less mean its hatred or liking for a system; ideas are nothing to it, but it is roughly logical when its own well-being is concerned. It decides for or against a government by weighing the greater or less amount of its savings that are left to it.

Now, one need n't be very learned to see that at this moment we are paying the debts of Charles X., the pensions of Charles X., the disasters of July, the riots of December; we are paying also for war and paying for peace. As power is always power—that is to say, it obeys its nature, it tends always to the unity necessary to its existence—and as to be *one* and strong it must break all that opposes the concentration of power, it follows that on the morrow of the day when kings, minis-

ters, and people have shouted "Liberty! Economy! Happiness!" all those exclamations must be contradicted by a demand for money — much of it, for there is nothing so dear as insurrections — and for despotism, because the more public order has been disturbed the more power must be arbitrary to restore to the public its state of things. That was how Sylla saved Rome from Marius.

Now, how are you going to make a whole people who reason little understand the dissimilarity between promises and realities? The inevitable consequence, therefore, of any revolution is dictatorship. It is my opinion that the great fault of the revolution of July was in not giving three months dictatorship to the lieutenant-general of the kingdom to settle on a firm basis the rights of the people and the rights of the throne. From that great blunder has come the tentative feeling-about which has brought all France to say to-day: "We are paying more and we are worse governed."

Unhappily, I foresee, within a few months, another change of system in the government. Just now M. Casimir Perier profits, like kings who come after long wars, by the factitious repose in which we all are. Riots have become as wearisome to the National guard as to those who make them; besides, they had no result; consequently they have ceased. M. Casimir Perier governs without riots. There's a minister who passes for an able man. He's astride of a fact: *no more riots*.

Capitalists, weary of keeping their money in a box, or their paper in a portfolio, are about, at all risks, to venture upon speculations. Another fact: *confidence is restored*.

All this would be excellent, and I should applaud it if I saw any warrant of stability in the present administration: I want a man to stay five years in power, even if he be imbecile. France was never better off than under

Cardinal Fleury, the weakest and most incapable of all ministers. But he let things alone, and to let things alone *to be done their own way* is the secret of all good government. To that maxim England and the United States owe their internal prosperity. Here we have projects of public enterprise and the funds all ready, when down comes a director-general of some sort to prevent the work.

This ministerial instability threatens a great part of the present administration. Still, the three statesmen I named to you in my last letter may resist the movement which awaits the political organization.

The Chamber will be dissolved a month hence; new elections produced by new elements will give us a Chamber not any more favourable to *resistance*. The incompatibility of most of the functionaries will put into the coming Chamber a mass of personal ambitions before which the ministry, composed of men who do not equally please public opinion, will bend, a new power will arise to direct the State, and the poor people who want to be governed will be more dissatisfied than ever.

The problem presented by the revolution of July, and which men who are statesmen ought to have solved, was to have so acted that the great shaking given to the machine should not have been felt, or as little as possible. Instead of that, up to this very time the ministers are constantly demanding much money, they have prevented no troubles, they have preferred to ruin France rather than proceed with any severity against agitators; and, in my opinion, any college graduate would have done as well. It did not require much genius to let things take their course when they were going ill, and try to direct and harass them when they were going well.

In the present state of politics M. Casimir Perier has a majority in the Chamber. The Chamber is a good woman, very virtuous and complaisant. She is certainly

very legitimate; otherwise one might consider all her acts illegal. A prime minister who really wants to restore peace and confidence, found a system of government, economize, lie-to before Europe, authorize private companies to build canals, ought to bring the budget to the present Chamber and postpone the elections for another year.

I don't see that the legislature lacks energy. In case of war it would be fine to listen to. It has already saved the country seven or eight times, it seems to me, and it votes the taxes bravely!

As for war, about which you ask, you know I am not possessed by fanaticism about words. Therefore I do not share in any of the daily opinions of the newspapers on the question of peace or war. War made for principles, for an intervention, or for conquest, is always an evil. At this moment, this evil seems inevitable. Not that we want war to have peace or Belgium, and to establish the principle of our revolution in face of Europe, but because it is a species of endemic disease: we shall have war because, sooner or later, the European aristocracy will attack us.

The moral and physical condition of Paris remains dumbly what it was. M. de Chateaubriand has, however, published a pamphlet. It is full of sarcasm and juvenile vigour, and it has much style; but it is not free from blunders. The faithful defender of legitimacy can see no possible government for France between a republic and absolutism: the true opinion of a poet, by which he sums up and epitomizes his "Essay on Revolutions" (first edition) and his "Monarchy according to Charter." It is unfortunate for a country when its most illustrious men either do not know how, or are not allowed to shine elsewhere than in the Opposition.

[SAINT-SIMONISM. FOURIER.]

1833.

There is a great difference between words and the things signified by words. It would be a profound mistake to think that our representatives represent us; that the deputies of the nation are deputed by the nation; and that Saint-Simonian means the same thing as Saint-Simonist.

In the first place the Saint-Simonian despises the Saint-Simonist, and *vice versa*.

The Saint-Simonians hold their sessions in the rue Taitbout, in the rue Grenelle-Saint-Honoré, and at the Athénée. The Saint-Simonists hold theirs in the rue de Choiseul. That makes two different doctrines.

And all the more because the Saint-Simonians dress in bottle-blue exclusively, and their popess, Mme. Bazar, has a magnificent bottle-blue velvet gown, while the Saint-Simonists profess indifference in the matter of blue.

A person who desires that his name be not mentioned assures me that he has seen Father Buchèz in a bronze-green coat; but that fact needs confirmation.

The Saint-Simonists have a pope who is infallible; but the Saint-Simonians have two popes who are equally infallible; consequently, the advantage lies with the Saint-Simonians who are twice infallible while the Saint-Simonists are only once so — But some people do ask how these three infallibilities manage when they come into contradiction.

The Saint-Simonians and the Saint-Simonists are both equally innovators. They invented, in 1830, the philosophy which Voltaire professed in 1780. They imagine themselves the first to oppose heredity, against which Rousseau wrote ("the fruits of the earth are for all, the earth is for none"). They have discovered that he who sows must reap, which was what Saint Paul said, quoting



Christ, who learned it from Solomon, who got it from his father David, who, in turn, got it from an old Hebrew peasant. Let them alone for five or six years, and they will invent printing, electricity, steam-engines — perhaps they will even invent gunpowder, and, who knows? fixed stars and mosquitos; they invented Saint-Simon!

The Saint-Simonists are spiritualists. The Saint-Simonians are spiritualists and materialists both — or rather, they are neither, in which they have the immense advantage of not compromising themselves.

The principal mission of both is to make war on idleness.

Therefore, imagine to yourself a Saint-Simonian (or a Saint-Simonist) seated in a good arm-chair well backed and stuffed, he himself enveloped in a comfortable dressing-gown, woollen, furred, wadded, his feet in morocco slippers (green or yellow if he is a Saint-Simonist, blue if he is a Saint-Simonian) resting on the andirons before a good fire; breakfasting copiously at nine o'clock, and again at twelve; dining at six, eating well, drinking better, warming his stomach after dinner, and taking a nap — What do you think he is about?

You may think, perhaps, that these worthy gouty or jovial epicureans are letting their lives flow tranquilly on. Not a bit of it.

They are writing and speaking against IDLENESS.

If any one does not yet understand the difference that exists between the Saint-Simonists and the Saint-Simonians, here is a definition given to me by M——, a brother of the preparatory degree of the Saint-Simonians in the rue Taitbout.

“We call ourselves Saint-Simonians, because the organic doctrines have given to their disciples nomenclatures which have their termination in *ians*, like Christians, whereas the sects which have separated from the latter

have taken names terminating in *ists*, such as deists, anabaptists, jansenists, molinists, calvinists."

He might have added, lutherans, anticheans, and manicheans on his own side.

So, let all those who do not wish to be Saint-Simonian, or don't possess a bottle-blue coat, make themselves Saint-Simonists. The latter are simply the precursors, the Saint-John-the-Baptists of the Saint-Simonians, and in order to fulfil their mission they preach usually in desert places.

The Saint-Simonians have lately extinguished themselves in the broad daylight of the Court of Assizes, but, nevertheless, they laid, in their way, a finger on the great malady of France. A man of intelligence might have profited by their dispersion and their momentary impossibility of action to enlighten the present government by blowing up the sparks of truth with which they made the fire of their moral sedition. . . .

Saint-Simon and Fourier were both convinced of the importance of labour, and desired to organize it. The principal vice of their systems is that they give to labour a preponderance it cannot have. The principal Saint-Simonians, foreseeing the triumph of the working-classes, became strong men in the various industries, and have all, taking up special careers, made their way notably.

Saint-Simon, who seemed to be wishing to found a new religion by giving fresh force to Christianity, founded, in reality, a new government in which the working classes took the place of the nobles; whereas Fourier, without having any religious pretensions, is perhaps more religious, and certainly does not interfere with religions in any way.

Fourier, from the little I know of him, seems to me undeniably greater than Owen or Saint-Simon. If he had nothing more than his theory on the passions he deserves to be better analyzed than he is. In that direc-

tion he continues the doctrine of Jesus. To restore the passions, which are movements of the soul, to honour is to make himself the executive of the sage. Jesus revealed the theory, Fourier has invented the application. Fourier considers, and justly, that passions are springs which direct the human being and, consequently, societies. These passions being of the divine essence — for we cannot suppose that the effect is unrelated to its cause, and passions are very certainly movements of the soul — they are not evil in themselves. In this, Fourier breaks openly away, as do all innovators, as did Jesus, from the past of the world. According to him the social surroundings in the midst of which passions stir alone render them subversive of good. He conceives the colossal work of adapting the surroundings to the passions, casting down all obstacles, and preventing all struggles. Now, it is certain that to regulate the spring of passion and harness it to the social chariot is not to fling the reins on the neck of brutal appetites. Is it not rather to do the work of intelligence and not that of materialism?

That is the general meaning of Fourier's doctrine, just as the divinity of the immortal soul is the general doctrine of Christianity. Certainly the man who rediscovers this, an innovator so extraordinary, ought to have more attention paid to him than he is getting from his critics. To be explained, opposed, or examined, Fourier's theory needs one of those conscientious, studious intellects like that of Hoffmann, former editor of the *Debats*, whose death has been such an irreparable loss to that paper. If Fourier had put his idea under the wing of the Catholic church, expressing it in terms less offensive to the fools who govern the world, I don't know what he might not have become. I am not taking any side here — either for or against him. I mean to study him, and I will tell you my sentiments later. It is to be remarked that Fourier comes from Besançon, a

town which has given us Victor Hugo and Nodier: a great poet, a great prose-writer, and a great philosopher.

P. S. — Just as I was finishing this letter, a friend of mine, who has the vice of admiring the present Court, rushed into my study, exclaiming:

“Now, what will you say? Here’s what the king of the French has just declared at Boulogne. Listen: ‘You know, my dear comrades, that *all* the glories of France are equally dear to me, and that no painful memory, no personal feeling has ever dimmed the homage I have endeavored to gather round them’ — Do you hear that? ‘*My dear COMRADES*, all the glories of France are equally dear to me,’ all, ALL, ALL!” shouted my friend. “Literature will be protected; theatres will flourish!”

“That reminds me,” I said, checking him, “of an anecdote of Napoleon which shows how truly that great man had the instinct of imperial dignity. At Montereau — or if not at Montereau, it was in one of the most critical moments of that immortal campaign of 1814 — he was obliged to give battle personally in order to get out of a position in which he might be surprised and overwhelmed. He looked round on those about him. He saw the fragments of a regiment of the Old Guard; also the remains of the brilliant guard of honour commanded by M. de Mathan (who told me this fact). The latter guard was then the last drop of the blood of France, her last sons of family, her last horses. Unhappily, there was not enough of them — if there had been more devotion the mighty efforts of Bautzen and Lutzen would not have been rendered nil by want of cavalry. He saw also his escort beside him; that, fortunately, was intact. After measuring the danger once more with an eagle’s glance, he felt the necessity of encouraging these bodies of men: “Soldiers,” he cried to the grenadiers, “let us save France! — Comrades,” he cried to his escort, “let

us do our duty!" and turning to the guard of honour, he said: "Messieurs, follow me!" Assuredly, to give such shades of meaning under fire with the shells about him was to be both a man of genius and Louis XIV.

[THE LIFE OF A WOMAN.]

1834.

Contemporary events sweep men along so rapidly that it is difficult to forget the heat of political passions in the midst of which all consciences are living, and to place oneself even for a moment in the future in order to view an historical figure in its true light, and to paint it to oneself as posterity will surely see it.

At the present time we advance between two reefs equally fatal: accusation and apology; two words equally cruel, because they mislead friends and enemies, do no good, and calm no irritation. I have long been used to see men pass before noble blackened buildings where even artists admired only some delicate carving; but I own I have been surprised to see a noble presence pass unknown and misconceived—a royalty without courtiers.

It is true that those among men who still retain their sympathy for the majesty of tears, the royalty of sorrows, comprehend that presence, admire it, but are silent. And when that noble figure descends from throne or altar and lies abandoned, they try to save it, but are silent still. And yet, for the honour of the country, some men should protest, in the name of those who are piously silent, against public injustice and ingratitude, even though they know that what they say will please no one. But was it not at night that the bones of the exiles were interred at Megara?

Here, the duty is more difficult; it is no question of interring bones, but of raising the crape veil beneath which a woman is buried alive, proudly guarding her

sorrows. But what hands are delicate enough, yet bold enough to touch that veil? what heart is so tender that it will not offend either the present or the past?

Every day, in the bosom of our families, we are called upon to feel for those dramatic misfortunes which cause our hearts to throb. Which of us would not be touched by religious feeling when the voice of a friend relates to us the life of a woman of sorrows, be she only a woman of the people and wonted to misery — for, to certain persons who look at the soul and not to external things, feelings are equally potent whatever may be their form.

Well, *this* woman was born in the midst of a happy family, and she passed in childhood from joy to sorrow. Like Catherine de' Medici, who at twelve years of age was delivered over to the fury of factions and threatened with cruel outrage, this child was imprisoned at the moment when the graces of her womanhood were about to develop, and each day as it passed, instead of making her expand as a flower to the sun, hollowed her eyes and wrinkled her young forehead. She saw her father and her mother perish by a dreadful death; she heard the plaintive moan of a brother younger than she, she listened to her last remaining relation, a prisoner like herself, saying to her — to her, young and lovely, to her, endowed with all the chastities of girlhood — “Farewell, my child! to-morrow I go to the scaffold where all our relations and all our friends will go; but for you, the horror will be that you will not go. Perhaps, just as daughters of sovereigns are sold for the interests of kings, you may be given for the interests of the people; they may marry you to the greatest, or the pettiest, of our murderers. — Farewell! I will pray above that God will guard your fate.”

And the young girl, then fifteen, remains alone in a dungeon, thrice orphaned, and a prey to all human sorrows — sorrows which pale before the dreadful terror of



a young and modest girl, a terror at which the feeblest work-girl would have quailed, which whitens the hair of women and gives them courage to commit the only suicide which God in his mercy pardons — the suicide of virgins.

Two years, three years go by; at last, a day comes when she is set at liberty, after living a prisoner through all the period when young girls most need air, sunshine, springtide, joy, verdure, and life amid the flowers. But this day to her is a day of mourning; she has no longer a country; she goes away, she wanders, she is all unfitted for exile; her hands, raised to heaven, know not whom to supplicate on earth, not even kings. She is proud and young, beauteous in her tears, in her lost youth; image of poesy, she goes, she wanders on; she comprehends, at that age when all is careless ease, the rôle of the noblest woman of ancient poesy — sublimest after the divine rôle of the mother of us all — she rises to Antigone. Ever inoffensive, she devotes herself to the worship of the earthly religion to which her state in life has called her; she makes herself the Sister of Mercy of kings; she espouses their sorrows, she becomes the sister, wife, and mother of the head of her exiled family, and consecrates her life to a hopeless old man, whose woe she shares.

So far, all is hard, is horrible, but God reserved for this woman something more horrible still. No doubt he knew the firm, religious heart he had fashioned with his own hands, and the strength with which he had endowed it. In a single day there came upon her all the evils of prosperity. Suddenly a thunder-peal rent the dark atmosphere in which she lived, the skies grew radiant, and a whole people, decked with flowers, rushed, quivering, to meet her, to salute her as Catholicism salutes an Easter morn.

She returns to the palace of her fathers, she inhabits it, she weeps there, but in secret!

She crosses — that she may not offend a whole people — the pavement of that square, bathed with her parent's blood, and the multitude, ever unjust, require her to smile!

Some writers have blamed her sorrow, silent though it was, as impolitic. Fouché insisted that she should smile at times when, in private life, women are condemned as unfeeling and forgetful of a grave. When every woman shuddered in knowing that Madame Ney was forced to cross that path of the Observatory where the bravest of the brave fell mutilated, not one of them was found to comprehend a resignation condemned to jewels and the glitter of a diadem.

Is there no woman in all this happy land of France constrained to hide her tears from a sulky husband, obliged to silence fears before a dying child? Can no one understand all that it needs of strength to veil this woman's grief? Is there none of her own sex trained to silent devotion who will honour in her a poem of self-sacrifice? No, the people who once tore from her the joys of womanhood now demand them of her tyrannically; they insist that she be gay and careless; whereas, were she so, they should utter a cry of horror as for a shame, a blot upon her sex.

Accustomed from her childhood to fear, she hides her alarms and tears. Again she goes back to exile; but this time she is stirred by the blood of her fathers, she calls to arms a belligerent people, comprehending that civil war is more honourable than the help of foreigners. But how could she prevent all Europe from helping her against her will? At last, she returns once more to the palace of her fathers, amid a silence of the multitude of which she alone had the wisdom to understand the full meaning.

In her life, one joy, a single one, was granted to her, just as, in the desert, the angel showed to Hagar the well

among the sands. A day came when she saw a whole people marvelling and rejoicing at an unexpected triumph, and she had the joy — joy unique in the life of this woman — to see all her innate sentiments gratified and summed up in the glory of the man to whom she belonged.

Seven years later she is again banished, she lives in exile, she suffers, she is a woman. According to the laws of the Code on women she is outside of all political faults, but the country holds her conjointly responsible, although the advice she gave was salutary and patriotic. She has been the Christian Antigone, she now has the sorrows of a rejected and misconceived prophetess. Her soul is that of a man. She accepts all, and rises the higher through great misfortune. The most malicious-tongued people in the world have never been able to reproach her for a single word of hatred; she has followed her family three times into exile, keeping the secret of her sorrows in her breast, and, to her glory, she has gone back to foreign soil, a poor woman, she, who might have foreseen poverty and laid by means for comfort in exile.

Such have been the sorrows that Europe and the world have known. Now, the "glorious July days" have laid upon her other sorrows which are a secret between the God of Christians and herself — the greatest type of human sorrow that heaven has given for our instruction. But the soul has its chastities; those griefs are not for us to betray; though could a man divine them he would feel that the greatest sum of courage does not belong to our proud sex.

Historians will hereafter name this woman; they will make her poetic because she is sublime; and, though the poets of our day have passed her by, those of the future will reveal her.

[Marie Thérèse de France, daughter of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. She was exchanged with Austria

for La Fayette (then imprisoned at Olmütz) by Napoleon in the treaty of Campo Formio, 1797, soon after which she went to live with her uncle, the Comte de Provence (Louis XVIII.), at Hartwell, Buckinghamshire, England, returning to France with him at the First Restoration, 1814. Again she was exiled with him; but returned after the Hundred Days, July 8, 1815. During this second exile she encouraged and assisted as much as she could the uprising in La Vendée, against Napoleon, under La Rochejacquelein the younger. Napoleon said of her that she was the only man of her family. She was married to the Duc d'Angoulême, eldest son of the Comte d'Artois (Charles X.). In 1823 the Duc d'Angoulême commanded the French army in Spain to restore the authority of Ferdinand VII. He stormed the Trocadero in August of that year, and crushed the Constitution-  
alists under Generals Riego and Muca.

In July, 1830, when Charles X. abdicated and fled, Marie Thérèse went again, for the third time, into exile and lived at Holyrood, melancholy abode of royal women. At that time her husband the Duc d'Angoulême, eldest son of Charles X., in consequence of his marriage being childless (a bitter grief to his wife, referred to in the foregoing sketch of her), abdicated in favour of his nephew Henri (son of Charles X.'s second son, the Duc de Berry), who is known by the names of Duc de Bordeaux, Comte de Chambord and Henri V.

Charles X., who had lived many years at Holyrood during the first exile as Comte d'Artois, remained there but two years at this time, and then went to Bohemia, in search of a better climate for his old age, finally settling in Tyrol, where the Duchesse d'Angoulême was living at the time the above tender sketch of her was written. — TR.]

*House in the Rue de Tournon.*









## III.

## HISTORY AND POLITICS.

*France and Foreign Nations. United States. Russia and England. Austria. Germany. Russia and the United States. Poland. Talleyrand. The house of Orléans in England. Egypt. Mehemet Ali. M. Thiers. United States. Spain. United States and Russia. O'Connell. European disarmament. Sweden and Bernadotte. Eastern questions. England. Spain. Mexico. A Prediction of the future of France. Profession of Political Faith.*

## [FRANCE AND FOREIGN NATIONS.]

February, 1836.

Before recording the movements made outside of France by the great political powers, observing the influence they exercise on French interests, and what is their degree of importance relatively to the general march of European affairs, perhaps it is necessary to cast a glance on the present situation in order to establish the principles that underlie my observations.

Europe still leads the world; if her intellectual superiority should ever be taken from her it could only be by northern America; but there, for a long time to come, territory will not be lacking for the population to develop; the ambition of the United States has space to consume before it desires to cross the seas — although it is true that the Union has several times attempted to obtain an island in the Greek archipelago, in order to get a footing in Europe; but if Europe is wise it will steadily oppose the invasion of the old continent by the new one.

Thus the sentiments and the struggles of Europe will echo still, for many years to come, around the world. England has possessions in every part of the globe; her breathing is heard from London to Heligoland, Gibraltar, Hudson's bay, the Mauritius, and Calcutta; just as Russia has one arm in Persia, the other in Turkey, a foot on America, another in Poland. That simple statement of geographical facts exhibits the present question to its fullest extent. From 1815 to 1835 Russia has made more conquests in absolute peace than any warrior nation has made by victorious arms. England has gained nothing. In spite of our national pretensions, in spite of those of the central powers, Prussia and Austria, neither France nor Germany has done anything to enable them to intervene in the great struggle which is making ready before our very eyes between Russia and England with slow gravity and infinite precautions on both sides. The prophecy of that eagle plucked by diplomacy may be fulfilled before the eyes of a selfish generation to which is lacking religious sentiment, the principle of resistance, and patriotism, worn out by revolutions. "Within fifty years," said Napoleon, "Europe will be either republican or Cossack." Perhaps Europe may be Russian *because* it will be republican; for in Napoleon's mouth the word republic meant a federation of States under a presidency by the American method. Now the federal system applied to the States of Europe is a feeble system which would leave them without defence against the blind force of barbarism. I use the word barbarism in no bad sense. The great migrations coming from the North have thrice reinvigorated civilization; and though the Arab invasion was geographically rather impotent in Europe, morally it regenerated art and science. To-day the problem consists in foreseeing which will be the most powerful — modern industrialism or military force. . . .

If the struggle begun between imperial France and Russia should be renewed between Russia and England, where would the London cabinet find on the continent the elements of a coalition against Russia? In thirty years things have changed. Russia has more means of action upon the German cabinets than England. England has nothing to give them; Russia could, on the morrow of the struggle, dispose of Hanover; England could neither calm nor rouse the ambition of three powers who mutually stand in each other's way: Würtemberg, Prussia and Bavaria; whereas Russia can rouse their passions as she pleases; already she may have marked the crown to break and give its pieces to her vassal. The mercantile interests of England have come in contact with leagued industries, and the union of custom-houses is a declaration of commercial war. There, at the present moment, an underhand combat of diplomacy is going on; there, for the moment, Austria and Russia are watching each other no less than Prussia and Austria, who are examining one another attentively. Russia has taken under her ægis Prussia and Würtemberg, the two powers which have the most ambition. Austria, on the contrary, whose alliances are all Italian, espouses Sardinia.

Austria is preparing for retreat (always desired) in case she is cheated by the superior powers — for evidently, in order to keep this doubtful ally, Russia has already arranged with Austria the partition map of the Ottoman possessions in Europe. But the destinies of Austria depend entirely on the life of one man, whose steady action maintains under one rule the most heterogeneous elements. The diplomatist who is to-day the providence of that empire has no successor; this man is too able, he has sat too long in the centre of his web, the slightest touch on its extremities are too well heard by him to let him be ignorant of the part that Russia has taken in the intestine and partial revolutions of Hun-

gary and the other Austrian territories which border the quasi-Russian principalities. Here, however, religious sympathies are the lever, and it is already grasped, for we must never forget that religious fanaticism is not wanting in Russia — the Greek church against the Roman church, Latinism against Christianity. Here the indifference of M. de Metternich, who cannot be blind to the weakness of his frontier, seems to me not natural. I think there is an under thought there, which, indeed, has not escaped Pozzo di Borgo. France is an ally who seems to M. de Metternich as dangerous as Russia; from the North unbridled ambition, cohorts and cannon; from France, doctrines. M. de Metternich is more afraid of ideas than of Russians. But I suspect that in his heart he cares little for what may come *after him*.

The ministers of the German powers are preoccupied in the midst of their real dangers with the same imaginary danger which has taken to itself a name among them and clothed itself with a form: Propaganda. Constitutional doctrines used-up in France, where they have not, as in England, a counterpoise in an oligarchical aristocracy, alarm the German states. If that danger has any reality, France has no part in it: the evil is inoculated. Lately, the Diet has committed an impolitic act in giving it consistency by its decree against Young Germany. In such cases proscription is recognition. . . .

Established German nationality should be a fact accomplished monarchically. It ought to be, as I shall show later, the object of French policy. Here we put our finger on another wound, on a painful spot known to and probed by the cabinets of Vienna and Berlin. In Germany everything goes slowly and gravely. Commercial union, which has just taken place under the auspices of the Prussian government, is a fact which certainly must have roused the attention of the Vienna



cabinet. But the Prussian cabinet, after passing this act of incalculable bearing (because it constitutes a first link) plays dead, it neither moves nor acts. Resistance to this law, begun in the city of Frankfort by Austrian instigation, is tardy and anti-German. Prussia has her special ambition — the ambition of a cabinet is always the expression of a necessity. Now the Prussian monarchy, which only exists by economy, on a narrow slice of the map, and which contains within itself great elements of duration through the contexture of its government, hesitates at this moment on the means of execution; as its way to conquest, it floats between the adoption of constitutional principles, and the trial of war; but, hampered by Austria, it is playing the game of expectant politics. It is not extravagant to think that the decree fulminated by the Diet against Young Germany, Heine and consorts, may be looked on by Austria as a victory over Prussia; whereas Prussia, on her side, may have favoured it, seeing a state of things useful to her interests in the struggle that will ensue in the bosom of a land where books prepare revolutions, as they did in Luther's day. The well-known ambition of the King of Würtemberg made him promptly lay hold of constitutionalism as the means of conquest; but Bavaria had also balanced herself by posing in the same way. These two States are playing, with Prussia, the comedy of the Gardener's Dog. All three have thought to use the constitutional lever in the interests of their aggrandizement; and whichever one of them attempts the grand work of German Unity will have the other two against him. Prussia, who would have nothing to fear from Russia if she played that rôle, would be instantly attacked by Bavaria and Austria, jealous of the monarchical principle, which they will not allow to be weakened, even for a moment.

Such is the intestine condition of the powers living at the gates of the Russian empire. Everywhere **secret**

divisions; and for Russia, in case of war, family alliances with Prussia and Würtemberg, and a close diplomatic alliance with Holland. If you join those three alliances, which bear upon the three capital points of the theatre of a possible war, to the promises made by the Russian cabinet to the United States of the Canadian possessions which adjoin them, and of an island in the Grecian archipelago, where they can have their magazine, a harbour for their ships and a foothold for their interests, you will see that Russia has long been making a scabbard for her sword from Warsaw to Brussels, and preparing for her fleets two great maritime allies — the United States and Holland.

For many a long day no plan has been better laid. Russia has Hanover to cede to her German allies; the Low Countries to fling to Holland; an important and wished-for hold on the United States; a *tête de pont* on France with Prussia; and as for Austria, she can buy her neutrality at any time by giving her a large slice of European Turkey, and legitimatizing her claims on Italy. Russia has, therefore, the game all ready for her dogs, who see no muzzle. . . .

The last uprising of Poland has been a unique opportunity for the nineteenth century; but if Austria and Prussia did not know how to profit by it, neither has M. de Talleyrand taken advantage of it. Though he said epigrammatically in London that Prince Metternich had lost his chance of becoming immortal by not returning Galicia to Poland, our great diplomatist did not set in motion the English and French fleets, although he then saw all the bearings of an event which might have ended as a great victory won by Europe over Russia. In this crisis, had Austria continued indifferent, Prussia could have brought to a successful end her secret project over Germany; but she lacked a great man, one of those great statesmen of prompt decision who count a woman as very

little in view of the future of Europe, as did Metternich twenty years earlier; certainly, the spirit of Frederick the Great has not shone in the councils of Prussia. After having held for six months the destinies of Europe in her hand, she did not choose to accept a noble future, ready to her hand, and to be realized by a simple declaration which would have brought France to the succour of Poland. It is beyond all doubt that the revolutionary principles fermenting in Paris prevented this development of the Prussian policy — a bad service, which may be added to all those which July, 1830, has rendered to Europe and to France. But the fact was, a general war struck terror to the heart of cabinets, and Austria said to Prussia: "You will lose your French provinces," because Austria herself was afraid of losing Italy. The secret of the death of Poland is in this mutual assurance, signed by fear of France.

M. de Talleyrand, in the midst of this paralysis, be-thought him, in the interests of the Orléans family, of an alliance between France and England. After having begun the Revolution with the father and Mirabeau, this old man ends it with the son and Thiers. The house of Orléans has always had the strongest inclination for an alliance with England. The Regent and Dubois burdened French policy at the beginning of the last century with an alliance with the Court of Saint James, when they ought, on the contrary, to have supported the Pretender. To-day, we again find that house closely united with England, and every statesman will own that this union is for English interests, not ours.

April, 1836.

The path of prosperity into which Egypt is entering will singularly complicate Eastern matters. From a statement published in the French and English newspapers it appears that the pacha [Mehemet Ali] has an

army of a hundred and thirty thousand men, a fleet of eight ships of the line, five frigates, five corvettes, nine brigs, and on the ways three ships and a frigate. His son, Ibrahim, is a man of indefatigable activity. All resources are combining to second the grand enterprise of civilization undertaken by those two men. An English engineer, Mr. Brettell, has discovered rich mines of coal and iron at no great distance from Beyrout. The steamboat "Nil" used this coal on her last trip in preference to English coal; the pacha will thus have the combustible in his own dominions and be spared the cost of bringing it from England. Communication by means of steamers with India by way of Egypt will certainly be a most advantageous thing for the whole world; but will England allow this ancient pathway to be reopened for the benefit of countries bathed by the Mediterranean? Ought not France to be the closest ally of Egypt? and ought not Egypt, from this time forth, to secure to itself a vantage-ground of support in France by giving her great commercial advantages, obtaining help in return for her civilizing enterprises?

Mehemet Ali learned to read at fifty years of age, and at fifty-five he conceived a plan of reform and civilization for Egypt, though he had not seen, as the Czar Peter had, the spectacle of the civilization of Europe; he had not cultivated either arts or sciences. But he possessed an instinct which divined true glory, an exquisite sense of the good, a mind, rare among Easterns, which reduced to their just value Turkish dogma and prejudices. Nor did it need less judgment, less firmness to give this good to his country in spite of itself, to give it perseveringly, without being stopped by any obstacle. It is a fine thing to see this pacha of Egypt using his despotism only in behalf of civilization; whereas in the New World Bolivar is employing the resources of this same civilization only to establish despotic power and degrade

a freed people. This latter opinion, I know, contradicts that of others; but it is founded on too many positive facts (which error and bad faith refuse to perceive) to let any doubt remain as to the actual events occurring in Venezuela.

Becoming, by the destruction of the turbulent race of the Mamelukes, the tranquil possessor of Egypt, Mehemet Ali's first thought was to develop the riches of the soil and turn his mind principally to commerce. His direct and constant communication with Europeans soon familiarized him with the ideas of a more advanced society. Thus commerce was the first means of regeneration for Northern Africa, from which in former days it had issued to spread the light of new ideas through the world.

The pacha attacked prejudices with great shrewdness and never failed to make true progress. Agriculture, canalization, mechanical arts, the first ameliorations in political economy, soon made the commerce of Egypt very important and multiplied the revenues of the State. Manufactories were set up by Europeans. Unfortunately, it seems that Egypt must confine herself to her rich agriculture. Besides which, the monopoly which the pacha exercises in all branches, and which cannot be justified, deprives the country of many of the advantages of its industry.

Whatever Mehemet Ali's ulterior views may have been, he considered it his first duty to form an army disciplined in the European manner. It is especially in its formation and in the capacity of the French officers whom he attracted to his service that we see his constancy.

It is well known that Turkish administration is the most detestable of any; it almost always cuts down the tree to get the fruits. Mehemet Ali applied himself to establish a different system, and this was his principal object in sending to Paris, to be educated and trained, a vast number of young Turks and Arabs, among them

many sons of the first dignitaries of the State. Some of his innovations displease his people, however, such as the perfected music of Europe, which Mehemet's subjects think very inferior to their sad and monotonous twanging; but the pacha has ended by triumphing in this as in more serious matters. He has insisted that his son and grandson should set an example of docility and zeal in all that he wants the principal Egyptians to learn and adopt. His care extends to all branches of administration and education. He has formed many preparatory schools, model schools, and colleges, and takes great personal pleasure in overlooking and encouraging the work of the pupils.

Mehemet Ali, while depending greatly on foreign, especially French officers, has found among Egyptians several men fitted to understand him and carry out his designs. Osman Bey, major-general, whose son has just come to France, has translated from French into Turkish our military theories, and all the most necessary books on the art of war and on our army and navy. Young, active, and indefatigable, with a strong and generous character, his will and his nature are in perfect harmony with the projects of his sovereign.

Ibrahim Pacha, who has been depicted as a barbarian, by no means justifies that qualification. The officers of our expedition to the Morea, and especially their commander, judge him very differently. Ibrahim Pacha gives good promise of some day filling, worthily, his father's place; and as his own son is being educated with the utmost care, these three men may perhaps suffice to accomplish the work so finely begun. Egypt has nothing to fear from the aggressions of any foreign nation. Our war against Algiers will not affect its position. The pacha is, in fact, very indifferent to that war, from the little regard he feels for the Barbary powers. They asked him for help, as being a brother



sovereign; to which he replied: "If you commit follies, you must repair them yourselves."

The constitution of a power which grows with such rapidity is surely an obstacle to the schemes of Russia and to those of England. If Russia wants the Bosphorus has she not everything to fear from the project of Mehemet Ali and his son, who may some day be accepted by the Ottoman Empire as its last resource? It is certain that Russia is making at this moment advances to Mehemet Ali, following the system long adopted by Russian diplomacy, of caressing a prey for a long while before devouring it.

Though France has furnished many men of talent to Egypt, our influence with the pacha is not as great as it ought to be. He is evidently our point of support in the Eastern question, such as Prussia ought to be to us on the continent. The interests of the South of France, our possessions in Algiers, necessitate this alliance so imperatively that it is very amazing it has not been closer drawn. All these great interests are now committed to a man so extraordinary, so fine in his plans and in his ideas, of a persistency so elastic, a perspicacity so shrewd, that the French cabinet may be about to take another attitude. M. Thiers will doubtless raise a levy of ambassadors, official and secret agents, and endeavour to get his past forgotten by some great future, in short, make his rise forgiven. Will he have studied history only to figure in a novel? It is impossible, I think, that the new president of the Council can be ignorant of the conditions on which power is kept. A man must make himself necessary; I therefore hope and believe that M. Thiers will now quit the petticoats of his protectresses, and walk without leading-strings. Ambitious, a parvenu, a man of intellect and a journalist, the man sits square upon his base; he has fooled the doctrinaires, he will fool France, and he has all the chances with him.

In the present state of things, it is impossible that political combinations should not change aspects; and there is for M. Thiers the singular luck of being at the head of affairs at this particular moment. Politicians have not all had the luck of meeting with such a chance. From this point of view the situation is curious: great things and a little man!

[M. THIERS.]

In nineteen successive ministerial combinations we meet with one name eleven times. Consequently, eleven out of nineteen times the king, the two Chambers and the government have admitted that the man was necessary. This man is M. Adolphe Thiers, the son of a blacksmith of the town of Aix in Provence, a bourgeois who married a bourgeoisie, Mademoiselle Dosne. If you have only seen the portrait of this man, now become celebrated, you may know his soft face, the grin on his lips, the clever glance of his pale eyes, but you know nothing about him.

M. Thiers, that ministerial flower, born on this political muck-heap, brought up among the ruins of eighteen wrecked administrations, invigorated by the wind of storms and trained to bend without breaking, is a very short man, not five feet tall, and looks like a child. But you, who take the *Charivari* regularly, you must have noticed a series of drawings on "enfants terribles" whose indiscretions reveal the secrets of the household: well, to any one who looks behind the scenes and knows the indiscretions of M. Thiers, particularly in connection with the *new household*, he is in politics an "enfant terrible."

Like all children, M. Thiers has within him an amazing naïveté when he is overtaken by events which he ought to have foreseen, but has not foreseen, for, however intelligent his nurse may be (he has in Mme. Dosne, his

mother-in-law, a dry nurse), this woman has not as yet all the virility necessary to her political functions.

M. Thiers first presented himself, under the Restoration, with a "History of the Revolution," which you have read, and you have, in common with a crowd of judicious minds, seen it to be less a history than a long pamphlet. Every history in which the writer does not consider questions under all their aspects is invariably the apology of some fact. The fact in this history is the Revolution seen from the popular side. M. Thiers was so severe upon Charles X. that his History placed him at once in the liberal Opposition. He cultivated M. de Talleyrand, who recognized in him several of his own aptitudes, and taught him to look at men and events in their true light. M. Thiers, a man of rapid perceptions, studied finance under M. Laffitte. He was one of the editors of the *Constitutionnel* and left it for the *National* (in which the house of Orléans was a sleeping partner), where he made rough war on the government of Charles X. There the revolution of 1830 found him; without much money, but without debts. He was already under the protection of a woman who plays an immense rôle in his life, and is, at the time I now write to you, almost a queen of France: Mme. Dosne, his mother-in-law. She is undoubtedly the spirit of his politics, a sort of Père Joseph in petticoats, who winds up the courage of the prime minister when it begins to run down. She has been the *dux facti*, the soul of the conspiracy I am going to tell you about.

She is the wife of a broker, who is to-day a receiver-general. M. Thiers, to whom we owe an article on Law and his system (which is incomplete in spite of its length), first appeared in active politics *en croupe* behind M. Laffitte in the second ministry, October, 1830. At the fall of M. Laffitte he discarded his mount, which had made his relay, and became himself minister of Com-

merce and Public Works, then minister of the Interior, and, under the difficult circumstances of Saint-Merri, he donned the Napoleonic hat, not far from Marshal Soult, both being on horseback and under fire. Since that ministry he has reappeared nine times in the various ministerial combinations.

On making his maiden speech in the Chamber M. Thiers posed as a revolutionary; he began, like the Southerner that he is, with Dantonian eloquence; but he soon saw that his grand phrases and his grand motions did not go with his shrill, cracked voice and his tiny figure. Advised, no doubt, by M. de Talleyrand, he has now substituted for his first oratorical attempt a conversational tone, a fluent speech, clear, shrill, cold, which, by contrast, appears the warmer when he touches the pathetic and mingles with it those guttural tears that are never wept. In this respect he is a charming comedian. All the men of the South are mimics; they are tender or wrathful, according to the person they talk with; they are jugglers in gesture and speech. They will appear to sympathize with you, grow warm and vehement, while within they are cold as a disused oven; they are prodigal of promises and splendidly bold in denying them, but they manage to console you with a douche of their holy water. There is some resemblance between Bernadotte and M. Thiers. But the latter has no more bowels than Pitt; nor Pitt's range of intellect and designs; but he has his elasticity and his will. His person is suited to his rôle. He is light; comes down readily to bonhomie, never rises to cold dignity, and talks too much. He can follow, and does follow, the course of things gayly. He approaches or receives an enemy with a smiling air in which there is neither pride nor modesty. This comes from neither that disdain for men which made Napoleon so strong, nor from English hypocrisy like Cromwell's, nor from the real depth hidden beneath Walpole's corrupt

tion; it is, in M. Thiers, an effect of his Provençal fibre, audacious, elastic, impressible, and indifferent, all at once.

His change of system in the tribune, his taking upon himself three different ministries, finances, commerce and interior, his loquacity, a quality obtained by his frequency in the tribune, and (as deputy of the opposition and as minister) his meridional *aplomb* coupled with the *aplomb* of a man who had put his nose into everything and begun to mimic dexterity before he had dexterity, all this served him well in the Chamber; just as his want of consistency and his aptitude, recommended by Talleyrand, served him with the Court. Having turned his back on the republicans, his first friends, he received at short range the broadside of their caricatures and their press. He wearied the press, yet he was always laying himself open to it; his family affairs being an open wound. Such an apprenticeship of political profligacy foretold a dangerous man. Well, my dear friend, this was not recognized. People did not distrust the man who employed, in order to succeed, the same methods he had seen practised for fifteen years, a man who betrayed his protectors! M. Thiers learned to manage men by complacently allowing them to seem to manage him. He made himself small. He was thought to understand the new politics thoroughly. The better to study his adversaries he allowed himself to be taken, sent away, and called back with the docility of a cat; but he was always undermining those who were given to him as superiors, he cast all sorts of entanglements about their legs, and, like Cromwell, he strengthened himself in parliament.

In common with M. Guizot, he has never put forth a system. He has, however, this advantage over M. Guizot: M. Guizot has upon his conscience the wrongs done by the royal government in 1815; he signed the

death-warrant of Marshal Ney, whom Berryer defended; M. Guizot has had tergiversations in his political life of which M. Thiers cannot be accused. M. Thiers has always wanted one and the same thing; he has never had but a single thought, a single system, a single end; all his efforts are continually aimed for it — he has always thought of M. Thiers. The separation of the two writers was prophesied as soon as they formed a cabinet, and the prophecy has been realized. But to say that they separated because they had different political principles, because one was of the inflexible type of 1688, and the other a *phenomenal triplicity* (as the great Cousin, professor of philosophy, would say), combining in itself the carbonic acid of Voltaire, the saltpetre of the Empire and the steel of the Revolution, is a mistake. I think, on the contrary, that the whole matter is a phenomenon of political homœopathy, and that these two great geniuses of the very flexible type of 1830 separated because they wanted the same thing. Yes, hereditary peerage, royal power, religion, primogeniture, aristocratic reconstitution, all that has since been overturned, I believe that Messrs. Guizot and Thiers both desired to reconstruct, but each wished to be the architect. M. Guizot has been beaten by M. Thiers because M. Thiers is a man of business and intrigue, inspired by a powerful will; whereas M. Guizot is not a man of business, but one who, bending to events and capable of perceptions that are perhaps deep, will never bend to men. It is unfortunate for a mind that pretends to sagacity to have been so flexible that we find him royalist in 1815, liberal in 1825, opposed to all advance in 1835, and yet considered to-day hard, puritanical, and the expression of an inflexible type; unfortunate, certainly, to be thought to lend himself to nothing when he has lent himself to all; to have not known how to contract through his many metamorphoses a profligacy of manners when he has known so much of



the profligacy of ideas; to be taken for an unaccommodating man when he has accommodated himself to everything and slept in the sheets of three parties. M. Thiers, writer of the Opposition, brought forward by the revolution of July, and wishing to make something and someone of M. Thiers, has the advantage over M. Guizot of sound logic and success. M. Guizot is a weathercock which has been placed on three buildings; M. Thiers is a weathercock which, in spite of its incessant twirling, sticks to one building.

You would hardly believe to what a point M. Thiers has carried his southern craft combined with bourgeois shrewdness. Minister at the time of the September laws, he contrived to throw the onus of them on M. Guizot. He tricked MM. Molé, Soult and Odilon Barrot, and having tricked them once, he tricked them twice, and he is at this moment engaged in tricking M. Odilon Barrot. Towards the end of his first ministry he conceived the idea of reducing the crown to what it is in England, and of remaining himself, like M. de Metternich, twenty-six years in power under father and son, aided by the Holy Spirit of the Chamber. This idea he has steadily pursued; it is in his head, and he can't have any other; in fact, he has no other. It might be practicable with an oligarchical aristocracy, but it would be an eternal subject of trouble in France, organized by election. This idea was put in practice by an act of sovereignty which led to the temporary eclipse of M. Thiers. Here is the scene as related to me by a personage of the Court:

"Imagine!" said this personage, "news came by telegraph that General Bugeaud had left Algiers and arrived at Toulon. The minister of war was summoned: 'Did you recall General Bugeaud?' 'No.' The Council was assembled. 'Who sent an order for General Bugeaud to return?' 'I,' replied M. Thiers. 'I want him to com-

mand the army in Spain.' General stupefaction. 'Then you propose to make war?' M. Thiers replied with the affirmative gesture that gamblers use when they risk a heavy stake, a gesture of the right hand, a rather vulgar gesture, which made it as offensive as a parody. 'You forget,' was then said to him, 'that by the Charter of 1830 the king alone has the right to make war.' M. Thiers kept silence. An order was soon after sent to him: 'Send in your resignation;' which he did."

That is how M. Thiers and the crown parted. I say "the crown" because quite recently M. Thiers permitted himself to say: "the crown and I." When people part in this way each can reckon on a stalwart hatred from his adversary.

M. Thiers must be accepted for what he is. I do not mistake the value of a man who to-day sums up in his person the revolution of July; a man necessary to the present government and, above all, concordant with the interests for which it stands; I am not astonished that M. Thiers seeks to excuse his elevation by services. Would not that be the first thought of a clever man, and M. Thiers, before considering him as a statesman, must be accepted as a clever man. His antecedents show Italian suppleness and the habits of a diplomatic squirrel; but between what he attempts and what he succeeds in doing there may be an abyss into which he will fall. Still, I think him so rivetted on the steps of the throne of which he was one of the makers, that none of the ephemeral makers begotten by the revolution of July has more chance of duration than he — provided he succeeds in realizing the projects imputed to him.

"You are a very difficult people to govern," a Russian said to me; "but how is it that M. Thiers can commit such blunders?"

"Because he is trying to do without his nurse," said a

person present. "All those blunders were committed in the absence of his mother-in-law. He had been so blamed for doing everything at her dictation that he thought he would try to do without her."

You will of course ask "Who is she?" for that is a question everybody asks. The *prima donna* (one of the names she goes by) is the daughter of a worthy linen-draper in the faubourg Montmartre. From her earliest years she sat beside the counter where her mother kept the books. When she was old enough, they married her to a young man who had learned the operations of exchange and the Bourse in a banking-house. This husband, M. Dosne, obtained, by favour of Madame d'Angoulême, a position as stock-broker. He received company, his wife did the honours of the salon, talked about the novel of the day, and got herself invited by certain journalists to the political solemnities of the period. This was during the Restoration. She wanted to enter the faubourg Saint-Germain and was rebuffed. She then became furious against the old nobility, and waved thenceforth the standard of liberalism. Whoever wrote in the liberal newspapers, the most insignificant enthusiast for Foy and Benjamin Constant, was welcomed in her salon. It was at this time that the author of the "History of the Revolution" was presented to her. Soon there was so much affection felt for him that he was treated as the friend of the house, and in the end was considered as one of the family. The revolution of 1830 opened to him a career of honours and fortune. He used his influence to obtain for the husband of his friend, heaven knows by what trickery, the receiver-generalship of Lille. M. and Mme. Dosne had two daughters. They waited until the eldest was fifteen to marry her to M. Thiers, then minister of Commerce. The young Élise, pretty and fresh as a grisette, has become quite pale and delicate; which makes a very witty woman

[Mme. Émile de Girardin] say: "You can't marry M. Thiers with impunity."

Mme. Dosne's influence grows and still grows. M. Thiers's journalists, the frequenters of the little Court and the favourites of her majesty, call her, in jest, "Madame mère." Do you want a proof of her influence? Here's a recent one; it concerns General Bugeaud.

General Bugeaud is courageous; he is a good soldier; he is not without sense and a southern wit which sets off his frankness. He said one day, seeing in the tribune an orator who makes up in talent for what he lacks in conscientiousness: "What a pity that a man of courage and honesty like me should not be gifted with eloquence like that! but if I had that eloquence it is probable I should not have either courage or honesty, so it is all for the best." Whenever there is danger, they call for the general; when the danger is over they send him away; and he lets himself be taken and left with a generosity that is full of pity for the men who do it. Lately, he came to Court from his country-house. He was warmly greeted, his absence was remarked upon, anxiety was expressed for his health: "Is there a riot?" he asked naïvely. But that cutting epigram made no man blush. Mme. Dosne does not like the general; M. Thiers likes him very much; but the nurse is stronger than the child, and when she applies the whip he always yields.

M. Thiers desired to appoint the general as Governor of Algeria. Mme. Dosne opposed it. However, the thing had been agreed upon, the general was appointed, and the appointment was ratified by the Court and that camarilla of eunuchs I told you about. Even the newspapers were extolling the choice. But Mme. Dosne was nothing daunted. What she did in the interior of the house (aided by her satellite, M. Mottet) nobody knows, but M. Thiers was obliged to rescind his action; General

Bugeaud pitied that poor child, and did not complain on his own account. As the Court had ratified the appointment, it was necessary when the general appeared there to gild the pill to the old soldier. They drowned him in phrases; to which he responded that there was no need of so many words because he was the servant *quand même* of the July crown. But you will not guess in a thousand and one years the vulgar grocer's speech with which the conversation closed: "After all, general, you have no *need* of the place." Whereupon the general spoke out: "If by 'need' you mean *pecuniary need*, no; but I have need to fight for both my country and my honour. That is why I regret that the will of Mme. Dosne deprives me of the government of Algeria, which you had offered me."

[FRANCE AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES.]

The bellicose temper of General Jackson is roused, and he threatens us with a maritime war. Nothing could be more advantageous to us; for no power would then interfere to prevent our increasing our navy. But England has too direct an interest in keeping the peace between the two powers to allow of any belief in the alarm put forth by the *Journal des Débats*. The war the United States is now carrying on with the Indians proves how little she is prepared for war, and shows how much harm France could do her. There is still talk of the cession of an island in the Archipelago to the United States, a project opposed by England, but one that will always occupy the Russian mind.

The English newspapers are beginning to despair of the cause of the Queen of Spain. Her government stands between two violent factions without having any counter-weight to oppose to them. There is talk of a French intervention in Spain, but I do not believe in it;

the intervention of 1823 had no success because it antagonized the principles that an intervention to-day would be obliged to support. Spain owes us an enormous sum of money at the present moment for having helped her to restore the absolute power; she would owe us as much more if we helped her to establish a constitutional system. Such a policy would justify Don Carlos, if he should ever become King of Spain, in intervening in France for the restoration of the elder branch. That is the secret of the inaction of the French cabinet.

The military situation of the Queen of Spain is uncontestedly weak; in spite of the Portuguese, French, and English legions, in spite of her own armies and her seven generals-in-chief, she is unable to prevent the present progress of Don Carlos. When a condition like this has lasted three years it seems as if it must come to some solution; foreign aid will not be continued to the queen, especially if the new Cortès introduce fresh topics of dissension at the heart of her government. The French newspapers, favourable to the queen, say that Don Carlos, after so many attempts, ought to be convinced that he can never reach Madrid; but may not Don Carlos say to his partisans that after the discomfiture of so many arms and generals the queen ought to be convinced that it is impossible to drive him from Spain? Every week aggravates the position of the queen. Catholicism is turning against her. Her decree about convents is only the expression of her distress. She is paying the revolution which will eat her up, together with the church's money. The first acts of the Cortès will alienate the wealthy classes from her. The Duke of Wellington and the Earl of Aberdeen were right when they characterized in the House of Lords the bastard policy of the double alliance which has half-done everything and stupidly supported a war that is against the interests of all three nations. The conduct of France and that of England on the Span-



ish question is that of two misers who give a sick man enough money to keep him alive a certain time, but not enough to prevent his dying.

The *Gazette of Augsburg* publishes the following extract from a letter of Lord Palmerston:

“ Endeavour that there may soon be no more talk of Spain ; otherwise we shall end this business by getting nothing out of it but a loss of money. You know very well that Louis Philippe is a weathercock ; he lets himself be influenced and guided by circumstances. He would be just as willing to settle matters with Don Carlos as with the queen regent if the first were the stronger. They won't envy us in Paris the guardianship of the little Isabella if we should consent to assume it alone. We have other things to do than to bring up children. Try therefore to put an end to this Spanish episode.”

The English, *official friends* of unhappy Spain, have not judged her with more impartiality than ourselves ; and, if the truth be told, their anger against Spaniards is explained by the few kind memories they have left among them. Their quality of protestant, their love of national *comfort*, their antipathy to all that is not within the exact limits of conventional propriety, their pride, especially, have been just reasons why a people so original as the Spanish should be alienated from them. We may say that while they murdered Frenchmen, Spaniards had more sympathy and liking for them than they had for the English who were helping them. But the Spanish have a hatred to all foreigners. Meantime the government of the queen-regent is growing weaker and weaker. The queen is taking her precautions and buying property and public securities in London, Paris, Vienna and Naples, which is no great sign of stability and strength.

I have several times mentioned the constant attempts of the United States to obtain a foothold in the Mediterranean. For almost fifteen years they have pursued this

project perseveringly. It now appears that, refused by Greece, by the Pacha of Egypt, and by Turkey, the American Union has addressed itself to the Emperor of Morocco.

Three miles and a half west of Ceuta is a little bay named Angera. At the eastern point of the bay is a little island which the English seized during the war to establish a battery upon it. By connecting this island with the continent (which is only two cable-lengths distant) by means of a jetty to the nearest point, a harbour could be made for ships. The shore presents a fine aspect. The soil, which is very fertile, can feed great numbers of oxen, and a brook which runs into the sea gives abundance of water at all seasons. Going three miles up the coast to the westward, there is quite a large roadstead called Calla Grande, which, with much labour, could also be made an anchorage. These are the places the Americans want.

The sultan hesitates; but several American men-of-war, among them a ship of one hundred guns, have gathered in that vicinity. If the United States should seize that point by violence, France and England would be forced to drive her out. This project of the Americans is said to be the result of a combination to which Russia is not a stranger; she would find there a shelter for her vessels, and would thus neutralize, in a measure, the advantage which the English derive from Gibraltar. I should not be surprised if this agreement existed. Russia must seek allies for a maritime war, and the history of the fifty last years proves that the Russian power takes its precautions very far ahead.

The French and English newspapers are full of this affair. A letter from Lisbon announces positively that the United States are negotiating with the Emperor of Morocco for the purchase of this property, and have already made him several presents with that object, esti-

mated in value at fifty thousand dollars (300,000 francs). I repeat that if the maritime powers of Europe do not promptly and energetically oppose this establishment, great evils will result from it later. The United States would make their influence felt in European deliberations, and would complicate all difficulties by their egoistic policy. The union of this important maritime power with Russia is revealed in these attempts to occupy this point, so essential to the projects of the two powers. We must not forget that while the interests of France ought to induce her to favour Russia in every way, that tendency ought not to go so far as to give her facilities for cutting France out in the Mediterranean — which the Restoration desired to make into a French lake.<sup>1</sup>

M. de Lamartine has been posing in the tribune as the friend of Dr. Bowring, a species of garrulous literary skirmisher, whom England launches upon the continent in advance of diplomatic questions. This friendship will not benefit M. de Lamartine; the illustrious poet has made, in my opinion, a great mistake in putting himself in the suite of Daniel O'Connell. Daniel O'Connell is perhaps an extremely poetic personage; there is grandeur in representing eight millions of men, in pleading the sacred cause of catholicism in face of the ill-disguised atheism of Great Britain; there is something sublime in the struggle of one man against a nation; there is genius in his political idea of keeping a whole people in *agitation*, in effervescence; for it is this constant agitation kept up by liberalism which has flung our eldest branch from one of the noblest thrones in Europe. But,

<sup>1</sup> All this recalls the fact that in 1816 the United States was said to be bent on seizing the island of Lampedusa, between Malta and Tunis; on which Napoleon, then at Saint-Helena, remarked: "What fools those Americans are! they, who can do what they please in one half of the globe, why should they want to have a worthless little island which will certainly embroil them with the European powers." — *THE*

let me say it distinctly, Daniel O'Connell is anti-social; he wants the overthrow of a fine, a great, a strong aristocracy which is the keystone of British institutions; he wants a triumph by the masses, a *Jacquerie*. If M. de Lamartine espouses the rivalry of France against England (a rôle for which his shoulders are too narrow) he is right; but if he wishes, and he says he does, to give strength to the body social, if he wants an hereditary peerage, if he wants strong power, if he wants system in the French government, it is ridiculous and anti-social in him to applaud a man who pursues with relentless measures the finest of all oligarchies, and who, if he succeeds, will offer, once more in our epoch, the spectacle of a revolution guillotined by itself.

Let M. de Lamartine say if he is whig or tory; whether he sits right or left. French tories ought to unite with English tories; aristocracies are solid bodies. Poesy and politics can never be sisters; a poet may be a great politician, but if so, he is an exception as rare as genius itself. I am far from denying genius to M. de Lamartine, but one expects something else of a statesman. The antecedents and person of the poet clash with this imprudent discourse. The French Revolution proves that we can desire the fall of men whom we admire. Daniel O'Connell, defender of an oppressed people, raising the Roman altar, is a sublime figure; Daniel O'Connell overthrowing the peerage is a madman. This madman may become a blessing to France, but to frankly own that, we must be possessed by the old national hatred which led a man to put out one of his eyes in order to put out both of his enemy.

May, 1836.

An official article inserted in the *Journal of Saint Petersburg* indicates a firm intention to make lasting the *status quo* of the Eastern question. There is talk of

a general disarmament; but the German newspapers let fall doubts as to the manner in which that measure could be effected. Disarmament is one of those things which are proved by themselves, and not by assertions or affirmations. The history of the two preceding centuries shows that fictitious disarmament has always been a most powerful agent in politics. Louis XIV. and Napoleon, Austria and Prussia, have all used that trap, while, as every diplomatist knows, each cabinet keeps a secret agent with his neighbour charged with the duty of watching his military actions. Therefore, whatever may be said in the newspapers, this matter of disarmament cannot be judged until after very positive and incontestable information is obtained.

The disarmament now talked of for Russia, Prussia and Austria is little in harmony with the official talk of M. Thiers in the Chamber of Deputies. An English newspaper, the *Courier*, insists that disarmament of Austria has been officially announced. It would, indeed, be worthy of M. de Metternich's conciliatory policy; but if the disarmament is not simultaneous there would be great imprudence in disarming singly; consequently, I hesitate to believe that under present circumstances M. de Metternich will disarm, unless Russia does likewise.

A change has come over the Russian hold in Stockholm. It seems as if old Bernadotte were beginning to feel the result of his treachery to Napoleon; his reign, hitherto peaceful, is not one of the least curious spectacles of the nineteenth century. After refusing to avenge Charles XII. for Peter the Great under the protection of the eagles of France, he now, it appears, is trying to do against Russia with France and England what he did in 1813 against France with England and Russia. If all that is said on this subject be true, if these clouds really arise between the protector and the protected, Bernadotte might be able, he alone, thanks to

his position, to re-establish the European equilibrium. It suffices to see the present disposition of the Russian army to judge the harm the aggression of a regularly constituted power could do when the Polish insurrection, ready to burst forth at any moment, has held Russia tied down for the last two years.

But for my part, I think that Bernadotte wants to die tranquilly in his bed. If he had had the plan which people now impute to him, he would have marched upon Finland when the Russian forces were in Poland; and as he then remained a peaceful spectator of the struggle he will not be so impolitic as to put himself in motion to-day. Morally, this king is a prisoner of Russia; the republican general is dead within him. Perhaps England may be seeking in Sweden, as in Denmark, a closer alliance in the event of her coming to an aggression; there are signs of such efforts in the rumour now current in London of a commercial treaty by which England favours Norway; an action which may perhaps provoke a certain coolness in the czar; but as such coolness would be impolitic, I don't believe in it. The united forces of Sweden and Denmark, as appears in official records, is fourteen ships of the line and twenty frigates. Their united military force is seventy-five thousand men.

The last number of the *Portfolio* contains a remarkable article on Bernadotte and his secret intention to throw off the yoke of Russia; but there are certain things in that article which seem almost too fanciful, such as the abdication of Charles Jean and his schemes. In spite of the great pains taken to induce belief in the authenticity of these papers published in London, their possible falsehood is too evident not to make us use the utmost circumspection in considering them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of the papers contained in the famous "Portfolio" being proved incontestable, people have lost themselves in conjectures as to who the writer guilty of this serious abuse of confidence



The *Constitutionnel* has just published the following article under the date of "Hamburg, June 6" [1836]. "The Swedish public has read with indignation in the German newspapers that the cabinet of Stockholm will ally itself more firmly than ever with Russia. King Charles-Jean and Prince Oscar himself seem to share this indignation, and although they may consider it neither prudent nor necessary to make official declarations on the subject, it seems none the less certain that the Swedish fleet will not support Russia in case of a collision. The commercial interests of Sweden and Norway, the enmities of Denmark, the rivalries of Prussia, besides principles and political existence, all require Sweden to be neuter, if possible; if not possible then to ally herself with the West, rather than be ruled by St. Petersburg."

I call King Charles-Jean and Prince Oscar's attention to the fact that neutrality is, for them, an impossibility; and that if they do not conform to the Russian policy they will be forced to vanquish Russia or perish; for St. Petersburg knows all the mysteries of Bernadotte's election, and holds in its hands all the elements of a revolution in Sweden, either by Prince Gustave, or by the claims of Denmark. No throne would be more seriously threatened than that of Charles-Jean whenever the strug-

might be. He was no other than the celebrated Huber, German by birth, but formerly private secretary to the Grand-duke Constantine at Warsaw. The revolutionary government of Poland procured these papers and many others from him. When the crisis came which ended the insurrection, the ex-secretary was forced to fly, but he took care to get possession of the papers, and carried them off. The Russian authorities notified the government of Würtemberg, and requested his arrest, he being then at Stuttgart. As his extradition had been asked for by letter, and in the form required by law, Huber had time to escape. The legal document arrived twenty-four hours too late. Huber then took refuge in London, and contributed to the *Portfolio*.

gle, beginning in the East, reacts, as it certainly will, in the North.

June, 1836.

The negotiations instigated by England for the evacuation and rendition to Turkey of Silistria [chief fortress of Bulgaria] are, it is said, on the point of terminating. If Russia ceases to occupy that fortress there may be a quasi-certainty of the preservation of European peace, though the stipulations on Eastern affairs between Russia and England cannot be settled swiftly. But while the English and German newspapers and the despatches from Constantinople assert that all is arranged for the rendition, the Polish and Russian papers declare that the czar is sending reinforcements and is fortifying the place with remarkable care. It is difficult to reconcile these contradictions. In my opinion Silistria will not be delivered up. The Porte owes Russia twenty-seven millions. When Russia receives her twenty-seven millions (in ducats or guineas) I think she will still find pretexts to refuse to return the fortress. But if it is necessary to restore the place, I will predict, without fear of being contradicted by events, that Russia will replace her occupation at this point by fortifications either on the right bank of the Pruth or along the frontiers of Bessarabia; in short, she will get change for her fortress. If the powers expect to end this affair by means of negotiations it will certainly terminate to the satisfaction of Russia; for she triumphs, above all, on diplomatic ground. She has marvellously made the most, for the last six years, of the enormous benefits which peace has given to Europe, but Russia has too vast an interest in debouching to the Mediterranean by the Bosphorus ever to abandon that purpose; she will always lie in wait for her opportunity. The greatest, the most vital of her interests is to shake off the thralldom of England, with whom she has been so closely allied the last fifty years

by the consumption made in the British empire of Russian products.

Statesmen who have studied the diplomatic archives of Russia know that Peter the Great regretted in his last years the creation of Petersburg. He saw too late that the true capital of the Russian empire should be upon the Black Sea, and M. de Richelieu was not the first man to point to Odessa. The productions of the Russian empire ought to have openings that are not dependent solely upon England, and by which they could be consumed in the great market of the Mediterranean as well as those of the vast monopoly which in this direction shackles the empire. Here is one of the great difficulties of the Eastern question. Already the Russian ambassador is opening it to the Divan; the English newspapers speak of an energetic note sent through M. de Boutenief, which prepares the way for a complete change in Russia and explains the sending of troops to Bessarabia, the rapid concentration of the forces in Servia, the provisioning of Silistria, and the journey of General Paskewitch in Bessarabia, where he precedes the Emperor Nicholas. A partition of Turkey between Mehemet Ali, Austria and Russia *might* take place before England could act efficaciously. . . .

A ministerial journal announces that the French government has received news of the conditions agreed upon for the evacuation of Silistria. The treaty of Adrianople authorized Russia to keep the fortress until the payment of the indemnity due from the Porte. The czar, it is now said, has consented to a reduction of the indemnity.

When Silistria is returned and when the indemnity is paid I shall believe it. And when those facts are accomplished I shall say that Russia has not conferred that benefit on Turkey without some secret intention. Per

haps it is necessary for the interests of Russia to keep the Eastern question for a time in its present state. But the cabinet of St. Petersburg is never unaware of the encroachments of England and her inward views.

What Russia desires most is the execution of her treaties; for, from 1775, the period when she obtained the free navigation of the Ottoman seas, every one of the conventions made between St. Petersburg and Constantinople — that is to say, the treaties concluded between 1792 until to-day have been giant strides by which the Greek religion has advanced towards its ancient capital. Now if Silistria is evacuated, is it not executing the treaties, including that of Unkiar-Skelessi, which England desires to consider a dead letter? and can the Porte escape keeping to conventions which Russia so literally follows? Peace, thus gloriously maintained, will enable Russia to strengthen herself in all her positions and to secure the gains that she is making both in Asia and in Europe.

Now to us, as men of law and right, it must seem just and natural that Christianity should recover its second capital. The cathedral of Saint Sophia belongs to the Greek religion, sister to the Catholic religion, from which it issued and to which it has the right to return. Russia will achieve that which the crusades could not do, and which Europe attempted eleven times. The religious question it is which unites Russia to Greece, to the principalities and to all the states of Turkey in Europe. I am astonished that the object which Europe has held before her for five centuries, and which is the vital end for all these populations, should be to-day the object of so many difficulties. London opposes that noble conquest; all Europe ought to second it.

My own desire is that the Eastern question shall progress in the interests of Russia, for the destiny of the Turks in Europe is at an end, and I would rather see

the Bosphorus in the hands of Russia than in those of England. All the elements of this great struggle prove that England sees nothing in it but the dangers that threaten her commercial interests. If, as is now said, she is trying at this moment to have commercial privileges ceded to her in Egypt and Asia Minor, it is to be expected that the continental powers will protest against that seed of monopoly.

July, 1836.

The House of Lords has just rejected the amendments of the House of Commons on the Corporations of Ireland bill, by a majority of more than two thirds of the vote. It is a very serious event, in my opinion, and England is strongly excited by it. Lord Melbourne implored the House of Lords in vain; he laid before it all the causes of alarm; the Lords remained what they were born to be; threats produced as little effect as supplications. Now resistance is beginning. The House of Lords has determined to repress it to the utmost constitutional limits; and as revolutions never spare principles, the peerage and the aristocracy are threatened with riots and sedition. That is how this pretended liberal party, which respects no power, unless that power submits to its yoke, always proceeds. There is some talk of a change of ministry in consequence of this resistance of the Lords which would put the Tories in office. I don't think things will go as far as that. The Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel cannot make a second school; minds are not enough prepared for it. Lord Melbourne must be left to commit himself more completely with O'Connell, and when England sees that she is being led to separation from Ireland and to radicalism it will then be time to have a re-election. There are moments when one ought to drive things to their own conclusions.

Spain presents always the same spectacle: on the part of the queen-regent, plans of campaigns, expedients to

get money, baits given to Cordova [general of the northern army], regiments of the Royal guard sent from Madrid to the northern provinces; all efforts to awaken a little enthusiasm among the troops for the government of the queen-mother. On the Carlist side, increasing funds. By admission of their adversaries, they are masters of nearly all Navarre, except Pampeluna. The English are taking advantage of these melancholy events to increase their influence in Spain; they are almost absolute masters of the littoral. We, on our frontier, are playing a very petty part; we intervene without intervening, we make pretensions to prevent, and we don't prevent. In a word, the matter is being carried on outside of us.

The troops of the queen-regent in Navarre amount to thirteen battalions and three squadrons of horse; evidently insufficient to hold the field against Don Carlos; besides, it takes money, and, unfortunately, the government of Madrid has no means of getting it easily. They are even trying to get resources from the sale of national property and the fluctuation of values; and the queen has actually rewarded as an act of devotion the revolt of the militia, who in 1823 accompanied the Cortès to Cadiz [when the French army under the Duc d'Angoulême entered Madrid]. After a display of such ideas, to pretend to monarchy! The government of the queen is getting weaker and weaker in Madrid; Christina herself is taking precautions, and buying securities in London, Paris, Vienna, and Naples. It is an impious war, that which is now being carried on in Spain; and how heavy a responsibility is that which rests upon diplomacy which, with its deplorable schemes, troubles the line of successions. The diplomacy of the treaty of London has led to this massacre of parties, to this atrocious civil war which revolts civilization.

The New World is still delivered over to revolutions;



the ephemeral empire of Mexico has just undergone a check; its president, Santa Anna, has been defeated in Texas, and it is said that a popular uprising overthrew him. When one thinks of the silly things that the Abbé de Pradt and the school of old liberalism have written on the model governments of America, one can't help wondering how such ideas ever acquired popularity. Truly, what a pitiable social state is that of the old and wealthy Spanish-American!

M. de Bulow has ended his functions as Prussian minister in London. He is another of the old men who, like Pozzo di Borgo, have maintained peace, and now retire from public affairs in order to confide them to younger hands. This generation of experience leaves us. Is that a good? The future alone can prove it. The only ministers of old and long experience now left in Europe are Prince Metternich and Count Nesselrode; but Count Nesselrode, as is now well known, has seen the greater part of his influence wiped out by the determination of the Emperor Nicholas to do much by himself.

#### [A PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE OF FRANCE.]

To Mme. la Comtesse de E——

July 15, 1840.

Armand Carrel, that gloomy young man, that bitter spirit, bore a whole government in his head; the man of whom you speak to me never had any other idea than to jump up, *en croupe*, behind every event. Of the two, Carrel was the strong man. Well, what happened? The one becomes a minister, the other remained a journalist; the deficient, but shrewd man lives, and Carrel died. But remark that that man may be caught and ground between two cart-loads of intrigue on his highroad of power. He has nothing to save him; he has not, like Metternich, the palace of favour, or, like Villèle, the protecting roof of a compact majority. I do not believe

that the present form of government will last ten years. The youth that made the revolution of July and bound its sheaves, the intelligence that ripened the harvest has been forgotten, and its young blood will still burst forth like steam from the explosion of a boiler. That youth has no safety-valve in France to-day; it is gathering up an avalanche of rejected capacities and legitimate but restless ambitions. What sound will it be that shakes these masses and puts them in motion? I know not. But they will rush like an avalanche on the present state of things and will overthrow it. The laws of ebb and flow rule the generations. The Roman Empire had ignored them when the barbaric hordes came down. The barbarians of to-day are intellects. The laws of the over-full are slowly and dumbly acting all about us. The government is the guilty one; it is not recognizing the two powers to which it owes all. It allows its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the contract, and it is now in a fair way to become a victim. Louis XIV., Napoleon, England were and are eager to welcome intelligent youth. In France youth is now condemned to inactivity by the new legislation, by the fatal conditions of the elective principle, by the vicious theories of ministerial constitution. If you examine the constitution of the elective Chamber you will find no deputies of thirty years of age. The youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and Colbert, of Pitt and Saint-Just, of Napoleon and Metternich have no place here. Burke, Sheridan, and Fox cannot sit on its benches.

However, we may conceive the course of coming events, but we cannot predict what those events may be. At present everything is driving the youth of France to republicanism, because it sees in a republic its probable emancipation; it remembers the young generals and the young statesmen of the past.

The imprudence of the present government is equalled

only by its avarice. The Court is composed of owls that blink in the sun, old men who either tremble before youth or pay no heed to it. The government is modelled on the Court. But dangers will come, youth will arise as it did in 1790. It did fine things in those days. Just now the ministers keep changing as a sick man turns in his bed. Such oscillations only reveal the decrepitude of the government. This whole system of political swindling will turn and rend those who practise it, for France is growing weary of these shufflings. She will not proclaim that she is weary; for never is it known how the destruction comes, and the why is the task of the historian; but it will come because the youth of France was not asked for its vigour and its energy, its devotion and its ardour; because the government and the Court disliked young men of ability, and would not win the noble generation of the present day by love, preferring mediocrity.

## [PROFESSION OF POLITICAL FAITH.]

April 17, 1848.

To the President of the Club of Universal Fraternity,<sup>1</sup> Paris.

I have this moment received a letter from a member of the Club over which you have the honour to preside, announcing to me that I have had the honour to be placed upon the list of candidates put forward by the Club; and he invites me to be present at the next meeting in order to *make my political sentiments appreciated*.

Permit me to reply publicly, in order to spare myself the labour of making the same reply to other requests of a like nature.

In the first place, it is physically impossible for me to present myself at all the clubs in Paris between Tuesday and Saturday.

<sup>1</sup> Club, as here used, means a political assemblage or caucus, which nominated candidates for election to the Chamber of Deputies. — **TR.**

I have already declared that if confided to me I will accept the functions of representative; but I thought then, and I still think, that it is superfluous for men whose lives and work have been before the public for a score of years to make professions of faith.

There are men whom votes seek, and others who seek votes; it is the latter who should *make their political sentiments appreciated*. As for me, if through my works I do not belong to the nine hundred persons who in our country represent either its intelligence, or strength, or commercial practice, or knowledge of laws, men, and public affairs, the ballot will tell me so.

If I am not elected I shall certainly not complain. I am of those who think that the summons of 1848 means, for whoever accepts it, a work of devotion to France, a work of abnegation, a task full of peril; and without finding it beyond my courage, I may find it above my strength; that is why I desire to owe my election solely to voluntary and wholly unsolicited suffrages.

From 1789 to 1848 France — or Paris, if you like — has changed the constitution of its government about every fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Is it not time, for the honour of our country, to find, to found a form, an authority, a durable rule, so that our prosperity, commerce, and arts (which are the very life of commerce), our credit, our fame, in short, all that goes to make the fortunes of France, shall not be periodically called in question? In truth, our history for the last sixty years explains the historical problem of the disappearance of thirty cities of Paris, of which nothing remains but wrecks scattered about the globe, the elders of our present Paris!

May the new Republic be wise and strong; for we need a government that can sign a lease for a longer time than

<sup>1</sup> 1789, Republic. 1804, Empire. 1815, Restoration. 1830, Orléans dynasty. 1848, Second Republic. 1852, Second Empire. 1870, Republic. 1871, Commune. 1871, Republic. — TR.

fifteen or eighteen years, solely dependent on the will of the lessor! That is my desire; and it is worth more than all other professions of faith.

This letter replies sufficiently, I think, to articles on this subject which I place among the many fictions that assail those who are afflicted with any species of celebrity. One of these articles represented me, only yesterday, as rushing back from distant Russia to solicit a candidacy. I returned from a pleasure trip ten days before the 24th of February (a revolution which the very wisest minds did not foresee) and I thought so little of presenting myself for the suffrages of Paris that on the day succeeding those events I resumed my literary work — work which gives employment to printing-offices, to actors, publishers, and newspapers. All such enterprises and industries feed a score of other commercial interests, now in suspense as to the future; to rally and reanimate them is, likewise, a mission!

I beg you to accept my salutations and to present to the members composing your club the expression of my gratitude for the mention of my name upon their list.

H. DE BALZAC.

## IV.

## LITERATURE AND ART.

*Artists. Lord Byron. James Fenimore Cooper. Victor Hugo. Pascal. Stendhal [Henri Beyle]. The literature of imagery. The literature of ideas. Eclectic literature. Classicists and romanticists.*

[ARTISTS.]

1830.

IN France wit, cleverness, smothers sentiment. From this national vice proceed the evils from which art suffers in this country. We comprehend art in itself marvelously well; we do not lack decided skill in appreciating its works, but we do not feel them. We go to the opera and the salon because fashion demands it; we applaud, we expatiate with taste, and we come out smug and unmoved as we went in. Out of one hundred persons you will hardly find four who have let themselves go to the charm of a trio, a cavatina, who have found in music scattered fragments of their own history, thoughts of love, memories of youth and fresh, sweet poesies. Nearly all those who enter a gallery are merely going to a review; it is a very rare thing to meet a man who is sunk in contemplation of a work of art. This instability of mind which makes movement its object, this love of change and this avidity for ocular pleasure, do we owe them to the fatal rapidity with which our climate forces us to live, within a few hours, under the gray skies of England, the fogs of the North, and the dazzling sun of Italy? I can't say. Perhaps our national education is not yet completed, and the sentiment of art may not be strongly enough developed in our habits and being. Perhaps we



have fallen into a fatal habit of relegating to newspapers the duty of judging art; perhaps, also, the events which have separated our epoch from that of the renaissance may have so strained and tortured our country that nothing as yet can blossom here. We have not had time to abandon ourselves to the necessary idleness of the artist; if we do not understand the beings who are endowed with creative powers it may be because they are out of harmony with our successive civilizations. These preliminary observations are suggested to me by the little respect generally shown in France to the men to whom the nation owes its glory.

A man who disposes of thought is a sovereign. Kings rule nations for a given time; the artist rules ages; he changes the face of things; he casts a revolution into a mould; he bears upon the globe, he fashions it.

Thus did Gutenberg, Columbus, Schwartz, Descartes, Raffaele, Voltaire, David. All were artists, for they created, they applied Thought to a new production of human forces, to a new combination of the elements of nature, physical or moral. An artist holds by a thread more or less slack, by an adhesion more or less close, to a movement in preparation. He is a necessary part of an immense machine, whether it be that he preserves a doctrine or that he compels an advance of the whole of art. Therefore the respect that we give to the great dead, and to leaders, ought equally to be given to those brave soldiers who may only have lacked the opportunity to command. If this be so, whence comes, in an age so enlightened as ours appears to be, the disdain with which artists, poets, painters, musicians, sculptors, architects are treated? Kings fling them crosses, ribbons, decorations, the value of which is diminishing daily, distinctions which add nothing to the artist — he gives them value, not they to him. As for money, never in any age have the arts obtained less from a government than now. This

contempt is no new thing. Louis XV., at supper, received a rebuke from Maréchal de Richelieu for the indifference with which he treated the superior minds of his reign; Catherine II. and Frederick the Great being cited to him.

"I should have to receive Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, d'Alembert, Vernet," replied the king, counting off a dozen on his fingers, "and live as the equal and companion of such people — not to mention the King of Prussia," he added with a gesture of disgust.

It is long forgotten that Julius II. lodged Raffaele in his palace, and that in former days kings treated as one power with another power the princes of Thought. Napoleon, who, from taste or necessity, did not like men capable of imparting movement of any kind to the masses, nevertheless knew his obligations as emperor sufficiently to offer millions and a senatorship to Canova, to exclaim at the name of Corneille: "I would have made him a prince," and to go to see David, create decennial prizes, and order great public buildings.

Whence comes, therefore, the indifference now professed for artists? Must we seek the causes in that dispersion of the lights that fertilize the human mind, the soil, and industries, which by multiplying the beings charged with the advance of knowledge in a given age has rendered great phenomena rare? Or must we ask an explanation of the provisional government, or of those four hundred land-owners, merchants and lawyers in the Chamber assembled who would never conceive of sending a hundred thousand francs to an artist as François I. did to Raffaele, whose gratitude led him to paint for the French king the only picture that ever came wholly from his own brush [Saint-Michael fighting the Devil]? Must we blame the economists who, while asking bread for all, give the preference to "vapour over colour," as Charlet said? Or must we seek the reasons of this low esteem in

the manners, customs, characters, and habits of artists themselves? Are they wrong not to behave exactly like a hosier of the rue Saint-Denis? or is the manufacturer to be blamed because he cannot understand that the arts are the costume of a nation and that therefore an artist is as valuable as a hosier?

Can it be forgotten that from fresco and sculpture — living history, expression of an age, language of the peoples — down to caricature (to speak only of one art), Art is a power? Perhaps by examining all these causes, and discussing each detail, we may find that some new considerations on the present situation of artists in France may present themselves. I shall try.

I shall begin by examining the considerations that are in some sort personal to the artist in the rather important question of the dignity of the arts. Many social difficulties proceed from the artist; for all that is formed otherwise than commonplace wounds, embarrasses, and annoys common people.

Whether it be that the artist has conquered his power by the exercise of a faculty common to all men; or that the power he makes use of proceeds from some deformity of the brain, and that genius is a human malady as a pearl is that of the oyster; or whether, again, his life serves as the development of a text, of a unique thought engraved upon his soul by God himself, it is admitted that he is not in the secret of his own intelligence. He works under the empire of certain circumstances, the union of which is a mystery. He does not belong to himself. He is the plaything of a force which is eminently capricious.

On such a day, without his knowing it, an air is stirring, and all is relaxed. For an empire, for millions, he could not touch his brush, he could not knead a morsel of clay, he could not write a line; and if he tries to do so, it is

not he who holds the brush, or the clay, or the pen; it is another, his double, his Sosie.

Some night, in the street, some morning, on rising, or in the midst of a joyous revel, a coal of fire touches that brain, those hands, that tongue; suddenly, a word awakens ideas; they are born, they grow, they ferment. A tragedy, a picture, a statue, a comedy, flash out their daggers, their colours, their forms, their jests. 'Tis a vision — as fleeting, as brief as life and death; 'tis deep as a precipice, sublime as the roar of the sea; 'tis a richness of colour that dazzles, a group that is worthy of Pygmalion, a woman, possession of whom would make faint the heart of Satan himself, a situation that would raise a laugh in a dying consumptive. Toil is there, with its furnaces lighted; silence, solitude open their treasures, nothing is impossible! In short, it is the ecstasy of conception veiling the torturing pangs of parturition.

Such is the artist; the humble instrument of a despotic will; he obeys a master. When others think him free, he is most a slave; when they see him agitated, given over to the transports of his folly and his pleasures, he is without power, without will, and dead. Perpetual antithesis! found in the majesty of his power and the nothingness of his life; he is either a god or a corpse.

There exists a mass of men who speculate on the products of Thought. Most of them are grasping. They cannot get fast enough to the realization of hopes reckoned on paper. Hence promises made by artists and seldom fulfilled; hence accusations and blame, because the men of money are unable to conceive of the men of thought; they imagine that an artist can create methodically as an office-boy dusts the papers of his employer every morning. Hence other troubles.

It is true that an idea is often a treasure; but such ideas are as rare as diamond mines in the extent of our globe. They must long be sought, or rather awaited;

we must travel the whole vast ocean of meditation and cast our plummet. A work of art is an idea as powerful as that to which lotteries are owing, as the physical observation which has endowed steam, as the physiological analysis by means of which we renounce systems to co-ordinate and compare facts. All things march abreast in whatever proceeds from intellect: Napoleon is a poet as well as Homer; Chateaubriand a painter as well as Raffaele; Poussin a poet as well as André Chénier.

Now to the man plunged in the unknown sphere of things that has no existence for the clodhopper, the man who in painting or carving the adorable figure of a woman says: "I have discovered her" — to artists, in short, the exterior world is nothing. They always relate unfaithfully what they have seen in the marvellous world of thought. Coreggio was intoxicated with the joy of admiring his Madonna sparkling with luminous beauty long before he depicted her. He delivers her to us, disdainful sultan, after having himself enjoyed her. When a poet, a painter, a sculptor, gives a vigorous reality to one of his works it is because the intention and the creation took place at the same moment. Those are the best works of all artists, whereas the work they have worked over the most is usually their worst, because they have lived too long with their ideal figures. They have felt them too deeply to reproduce them.

It is difficult to express the happiness that artists find in this pursuit of ideas. It is related that Newton, having begun to meditate one morning, was found the next morning in the same attitude, and believed it to be still the morning of the day before. A like fact is told of La Fontaine and of Cardan.

These pleasures of ecstasy peculiar to artists are, after the capricious uncertainty of their creative power, a second cause which draws down upon them the social reprobation of precise and proper persons. In these

hours of delirium, during these long pursuits of ideas, when no earthly care can touch them, no money considerations move them, they forget all. M. de Corbière said, in this sense, truly: "Often an artist needs no more than a garret and bread." But after these long marches of Thought, after inhabiting these peopled solitudes, these magic palaces, the artist is of all beings the one who most needs the resources created by civilization for the amusement of the rich and idle. He needs a Princess Léonore, who, like her whom Goethe has placed beside Tasso, shall busy herself with his gold-laced cloak and his lace collaret. It is to the immoderate exercise of this power of ecstasy, to the long contemplation of their mental objects that artists owe their indigence.

If there is a work that is worthy of human gratitude it is the devotion with which some women have consecrated themselves to watch and care for these glorious beings, these blind men, who rule the world and have not bread to eat. If Homer had met his Antigone she would have shared his immortality.

Thus, in the first place, the artist is not, to use Richelieu's expression, "*un homme de suite*" — a steady, punctual man; he has not that respectable eagerness for money which spurs all the thoughts of the merchant. If he runs after money it is always for some momentary need; for avarice is the death of genius; in the soul of a creator there is, necessarily, too much generosity for so mean a sentiment to enter.

In the second place, the artist is lazy in the eyes of common people. These two peculiarities, the necessary consequences of the immoderate exercise of Thought, are two vices. A man of talent is almost always a son of the people. The son of a rich man or of a patrician, well-groomed, well-fed, accustomed to live in luxury, is little disposed to enter a career the difficulties of which rebuff him. If he is born with a sentiment of art it is soon



blunted in the mere enjoyments of social life. So the two primitive vices of the man of talent become the more reprehensible because they seem, by reason of his situation in the world, to be the result of idleness and voluntary poverty; for common people call his mental toil laziness, and his disinterestedness indifference.

But this is not all. A man accustomed to make his soul a mirror before which the whole universe comes to be reflected, and in which appear, at his will, countries and their customs, men and their passions, necessarily lacks that species of logic, that obstinacy which the world calls "character." He is a trifle *catin* [harlot]; forgive me that expression. He is as impassioned as a child for whatever strikes his fancy. He conceives all, and he experiences all. Common people brand as false judgment that powerful faculty of seeing both sides of the human coin. This is how it is that an artist may be cowardly in a battle and brave upon the scaffold; he will love with idolatry and quit his mistress without apparent reason; he will speak his thoughts naïvely about the silly things that the enthusiasm of fools glorifies; he will readily be the man of all despotisms, or a republican without any yoke at all. He exhibits in what men call "character" the utter uncertainty that rules his creative thought; letting his material self be the plaything of human events, because his soul is ever hovering elsewhere. His head is in the skies and his feet on earth; he is a child, and a giant. What triumphant superiority for steady, consistent men who get up in the morning with fixed ideas of making money or cringing to a minister, when they note their perpetual contrast to these poor, ill-bred, solitary artists!

But this is not all. Thought is a thing which is in some sort against nature. In the first ages of the world man was wholly *external*. Now, the arts are the abuse — that is the using up — of Thought. We do not perceive this because, like children of ancient families who inherit

enormous wealth without suspecting the pains their forefathers had to amass it, we have gathered to ourselves the fruits of twenty centuries; but we ought not to lose this fact from sight if we wish to explain to ourselves truthfully the Artist, his ills, the fantastic peculiarities of his terrestrial cohabitation, and the fact that the Arts have something supernatural about them. . . .

The moral of these observations may be summed up in a sentence: *A great man must always be unhappy*. Therefore, in him, resignation is sublime virtue. In this respect, Christ is a type. That man, suffering death as the price of the divine light he shed upon the earth, and rising to heaven on a cross that changes him from man to God, is a mighty spectacle; there is more in it than a religion; it is the eternal type of human divinity. Dante in exile, Cervantes in a hospital, Milton in a cottage, Correggio dying of fatigue under the weight of a brass burden, Poussin ignored, Napoleon at St. Helena, are the reflections of the great and divine spectacle of Christ on the cross, dying to live again, leaving his earthly body to reign in the skies; man first, God after; man for the greater number; God to the few faithful; little understood, yet worshipped; and not becoming God until he is baptized in his own blood.

The artist is the apostle of some Truth, the organ of the Eternal Father, who makes use of him to give a new and special development to the Work which we are all accomplishing for Him blindly. The history of the human mind is unanimous as to the keen repulsion, the rebellion excited by new discoveries, truths and principles that most powerfully influence the destiny of humanity. The mass of fools who have the right of way decree that there are injurious truths; as if the revelation of a new idea were not the act of the Divine will, and as if evil itself were not comprehended in His plan as an invisible good—invisible to our weak eyes. So all the anger of

fools falls upon the artist, the creator, the instrument. Men who have rejected Christian truths, and swamped them in floods of blood, attack the sound ideas of a philosopher who develops the Gospel, of a poet who co-ordinates the literature of his land with the principles of a national belief, of a painter who restores a school, a physician who corrects an error, a genius who dethrones the stupidity of a teaching immemorial in its rut. So for this apostleship, this inward conviction, there falls upon the artist the solemn blame which unreflecting persons cast upon men of talent.

An artist is a religion to himself. Like a priest, he would deserve to be the opprobrium of humanity if he did not have faith. If he did not believe in himself he would not be a man of genius. "It moves!" said Galileo, kneeling before his judges. . . .

Every man endowed by toil or by nature with the power of creation should never forget to *cultivate art for art's sake*; not to ask of it other pleasures than those it gives, other treasures than those it pours into his soul in silence and solitude. A great artist should always leave his greatness behind him when he enters social life; and he should never defend himself, because, besides TIME, there is above him an auxiliary more powerful than all else. To *produce* and to *struggle* are two human lives; none of us is strong enough to fulfil both destinies.

[MEMOIRS OF LORD BYRON.]

1835.

Memoirs? Why, that is an Irishism. How, after having burned the true memoirs, does Mr. Thomas Moore venture to publish those of which Mme. Belloc has given us a translation?

Having written Confessions which would have added treasures to the important documents left by Montaigne,

Cardinal de Retz, Saint-Simon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Casanova, upon the human soul, Lord Byron weighed, scrupulously, the honour, honesty, and friendship of the men he immortalized by allowing them to approach him; being unwilling to leave the testament of his genius, the revelation of his sorrows, the secret of his thought in any but incorruptible hands. He decided upon Thomas Moore.

Lord Byron dead, the trustee on whose fidelity the dying great man rested *burned what did not belong to him* to please — whom? Sir Ralph Milbank, the mother of the terrible Annabella, and Lady Byron herself. He sacrificed the victim to his executioners; a masterpiece to its enemies! Mr. Thomas Moore is for ever famous. Hudson Lowe held captive the living Napoleon, Thomas Moore sells Byron dead. The one insulted genius in its decline, the other has smothered human Thought in its germ — one the jailer of greatness, the other the destroyer of a book covered with the tears of a poet. These pretended Memoirs — bitter sarcasm! — are a collection of letters written, for the most part, to Mr. Thomas Moore by Lord Byron. This gentleman burns what belongs to the universe, and publishes much that might stay in his desk. What deep pity, nay, what horror must we feel for England, her morals, her hypocrisy!

Do not expect to find in this book any revelations of Byron's heart. Mr. Thomas Moore has avoided speaking of anything that has one iota of soul within it. He seems to be seeing an old devil who has managed to get admitted into paradise. He is a thousand times more prudish than Saint Agnes. Fancy reading two volumes on Lord Byron only to know that he boxed at regular hours, ate but one biscuit a day, and drank soda-water!

It is a book full of insincerity; it is true only about trifles; it keeps silence on the catastrophes which influenced the genius of Byron. Mr. Thomas Moore sees

him as a courtier saw Napoleon. Two little men trying to lift up two giants!

The conversations of Captain Medwin, the work of Mme. Belloc, the revelations of Henrietta Wilson are more precious than the "Memoirs" published by Mr. Thomas Moore. Although I must acknowledge that in the two volumes I have read I have met, here and there, with a few thoughts, a few original flashes which belong evidently to Lord Byron; but *rari nantes in gurgite vasto!*

[To Mme. la Comtesse E——.]

1840.

. . . At the present day criticism exists no longer. We see spiteful attacks from man to man, envious assertions which the victims disdain to contradict; but the well-informed critic, who has meditated on the means and who knows the resources of art, who criticises with the laudable intention of explaining and consecrating the progress of literary science, having read the works he discusses, that man is still to find, and will not be found soon. And this is why: to read a work, to render account of it to one's self before rendering an account to the public, seeking for defects in the interest of letters and not for the sad pleasure of stinging an author, is a task that needs more than a day; it needs weeks.

I have not, madame, the pretension to be a critic, but I accept the office of telling you what pleases me and what displeases me in current literature, and I shall give my reasons conscientiously. If I am mistaken you will correct me, criticising the critic as you do sometimes. I shall only talk to you about the works of practised pens, not concerning myself with those of beginners except in cases where I find superior beauties.

The true usefulness of criticism lies in the indication of the principles of modern art. Literature has undergone, during the last twenty-five years, a transformation which has changed the laws of the poetic. Dramatic form,

colour, and science have entered every species of it. The most serious books are forced to obey this movement which renders all compositions attractive; but human intelligence will lose what pleasure gains if there should perish in France through this metamorphosis the training necessary to every writer and the invincible logic of thought, which, far more than beauty of phrase, constitutes the eternal beauty of the French language. I believe that the different merits of the two preceding literary centuries can, and ought to enter into modern works. If some of these works have obtained universal success, their success is derived from a union of those merits augmented by the brilliancy they receive from the new form. I am not of those who despise their epoch, who crush modern writers by comparison with the seven or eight geniuses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I think that the secondary talent of our day is so much above the secondary talent of former times that the conditions of fame have become far more difficult for writers of the highest order. But I believe that if ever a patient, thorough, enlightened criticism was necessary it is at this moment when the multiplicity of work, the ardour of ambitions, are producing a general medley, and causing as much disorder in literature as there now is in painting — which has no longer either masters or schools, and where the lack of discipline is compromising the sacred cause of art and hampers everything, even the instinct of the beautiful, on which depends production.

[JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.]

After two weak works Cooper has just recovered himself by “The Pathfinder.” It is a noble book; worthy of “The Last of the Mohicans,” “The Pioneers,” and “The Prairie,” to which it serves as a completion. Cooper is in our epoch the only author worthy of being put beside



Walter Scott; he does not equal him, but he has his genius. He owes the high place he holds in modern literature to two faculties: that of painting the sea and seamen; that of idealizing the magnificent landscapes of America. I cannot understand how the author of "The Pilot" and "The Red Rover" can be the same man who wrote the other novels—excepting "The Spy." These seven works are his true and only titles to fame. I do not say this lightly, for I have read and re-read the works of the American novelist, or rather let me say the American historian. I feel for his two faculties the admiration Walter Scott felt for them, which is still further deserved by the grandeur, the originality of *Leather-Stocking*, that fine personality which binds into one "The Pioneers," "The Mohicans," "The Pathfinder" and "The Prairie." *Leather-Stocking* is a statue, a magnificent moral hermaphrodite, born of the savage state and of civilization, who will live as long as literatures last. I do not know that the extraordinary work of Walter Scott furnishes a creation as grandiose as that of this hero of the savannas and the forests. Gurth in "*Ivanhoe*" approaches *Leather-Stocking*. We feel that if the great Scotchman had seen America he might have created *Leather-Stocking*. It is, especially, by that man, half Indian, half civilized, that Cooper has risen to the level of Walter Scott.

The subject of "The Pathfinder" is excessively simple. . . . I like these simple subjects; they show great strength of conception and are always full of riches. The first part of the book paints the Oswego, one of the rivers that fall into Lake Ontario, and the shores along which lurk the savages who are seeking to seize the travellers. Here Cooper becomes once more the great Cooper. The description of the forest, the waters of the river, and the falls, the wily schemes of the savages foiled by the Great Snake, Jasper, and *Leather-Stocking* himself,

supply a succession of marvellous tableaux, which in this work as in those that preceded it are quite inimitable. Never did typographed language approach so closely to painting. This is the school that literary landscape-painters ought to study; all the secrets of the art are here. This magic prose not only shows to the mind the river, its banks, the forests and their trees, but it succeeds in giving us a sense of both the slightest circumstances and the combined whole. The same genius which heretofore launched you on the ocean and impassioned you with its vast extent, now reveals to you the primeval forest and makes you quiver in detecting Indians behind the trees, in the water, under the rocks. When the spirit of solitude has spoken to you, when the cool stillness of eternal shade has soothed you, when you hover, as it were, above that rich vegetation, your heart is all emotion. From page to page dangers rise naturally, without any effort to bring them on the scene. You think that you yourself are bending beneath those giant trees to follow the trail of a moccasin. The dangers are so allied to the lay of the land that you examine attentively the rocks, the trees, the rapids, the bark canoes, the bushes; you incarnate yourself in the country; it passes into you, or you into it, and you know not how this metamorphosis, the work of genius, has been accomplished; but you feel it impossible to separate the soil, the vegetation, the waters, their expanse, their configuration, from the interests that agitate you. The personages become what they really are, a small matter in this grand scene which your eye measures. The encounters with Indians, the wiles and fights of the savages have no monotony; they are not like any others already used by Cooper. The picture of the fort, the period of rest to the personages, the scene of the target, are masterpieces. We owe a debt of gratitude to the author for his choice of humble personages. Excepting the young girl, who is not true,

and whose characteristics are painfully invented and useless, these figures are *nature*, to use the word of studios. It is unfortunate, however, that the English seaman and Lieutenant Muir, the two pivots of the naive, simple drama, should be failures. A little good advice, a little more study and this composition would have had no defect. The navigation of the lake, a delicious miniature, is equal to the finest of Cooper's maritime scenes. The expedition to the Thousand Islands, and the fights of the Iroquois supported by a French officer, have an interest equal to that which made "The Mohicans" a masterpiece in this line. Leather-Stocking, under one name or another, dominates all else, here as elsewhere, and more than elsewhere. That figure, so profoundly melancholy, is here in part explained.

Enough on the interest and the details of this fine work ; it may be more useful to seek out its faults. That which renders Cooper inferior to Walter Scott is his profound and radical impotence for the comic, and his perpetual intention to divert you, in which he never succeeds. I feel, in reading Cooper, a singular sensation, as if while listening to beautiful music there was near me some horrible village fiddler scraping his violin and harrowing me by playing the same air. To produce what he thinks to be comic he puts into the mouth of one of his personages a silly joke, invented *a priori*, some notion, a mental vice, a deformity of mind, which is shown in the first chapters and reappears, page after page, to the last. This joke and this personage form the village fiddler I speak of. To this system we owe David in "The Mohicans," the English sailor and Lieutenant Muir in "The Pathfinder ;" in short, all the so-called comic figures in Cooper's works.

The originator of this malady was Walter Scott. The visit of King Charles, of which Lady Bellenden speaks seven or eight times in "The Puritans," and other like features of which Walter Scott, as a man of genius, was

chary, have been the ruin of Cooper. The great Scotchman never abused this means, which is petty, and reveals an aridity, a barrenness of mind. Genius consists in making gush from a situation the words by which a character reveals itself, and not in bedizening a personage with a speech adapted to the occasion. It is perfectly permissible to pose a man as gay, or gloomy, or ironical; but his gayety, his gloom, his irony must be manifested by traits of character. After painting your personage, make him talk; but to make him always say the same thing is impotent. It is in the invention of circumstances and in that of characteristic traits that the genius of the modern *trouvère* reveals itself. If you do not feel within you the power of creating thus, remain *yourself*; seek, work out the resources that are really within you. In "Redgauntlet" there is an old smuggler who repeatedly remarks: "And therefore, consequently," but Walter Scott has made that expression a source of inextinguishable humour which never wearies us. I was absolutely saddened when, in this noble work of Cooper's, I found the same jest in the sailor and the four women of Lieutenant Muir.

Sublime when he initiates you into the beauties of American nature, Cooper weakens in his preparation of the drama, and he only atones for this weakness by the beauty of his details. Never would Walter Scott have committed the blunder of raising suspicions on the character of Jasper before the middle of the book. We are made to see the necessity of the means and the means itself. Lieutenant Muir ought to have appeared much sooner, and the author would have created more interest by adroitly suggesting his treachery and his relations with Arrow-Head.

I have a serious reproach to make to this author. Certainly, Cooper does not owe his fame to his fellow-citizens, neither does he owe it to England; he owes it in

a great measure to the passionate admiration of France, to our fine and noble country, more considerate of foreign men of genius than she is of her own poets. Cooper has been understood and, above all, appreciated in France. I am therefore surprised to see him ridicule the French officers who were in Canada in 1750. Those officers were gentlemen, and history tells us that their conduct was noble. Is it for an American, whose position demands of him lofty ideas, to give a gratuitously odious character to one of those officers when the sole succour that America received during her War of Independence came from France? My observation is, I think, the more just because in reading over all Cooper's works I find it impossible to discover even a trace of good-will to France.

The difference that exists between Walter Scott and Cooper is derived essentially from the nature of the subjects towards which their genius led them. From Cooper's scenes nothing philosophical or impressive to the intellect issues when, the work once read, the soul looks back to take in a sense of the whole. Yet both are great historians; both have cold hearts; neither will admit passion, that divine emanation, superior to the virtue that man has constructed for the preservation of society; they have suppressed it, they have offered it as a holocaust to the blue-stockings of their country; but the one initiates you into great human evolutions, the other into the mighty heart of Nature herself. One has brought literature to grasp the earth and ocean, the other makes it grapple body to body with humanity. Read Cooper, and this will strike you, especially in the "*Pathfinder*." You will not find a portrait which makes you think, which brings you back into yourself by some subtle or ingenious reflection, which explains to you facts, persons, or actions. He seems, on the contrary, to wish to plunge you into solitude and leave you to dream there. Whereas Scott gives you, wherever you are, a brilliant company of

human beings. Cooper's work isolates; Scott weds you to his drama as he paints with broad strokes the features of his country at all epochs. The grandeur of Cooper is a reflection of the Nature he depicts; that of Walter Scott is more peculiarly his own. The Scotchman procreates his work; the American is the son of his. Walter Scott has a hundred aspects; Cooper is a painter of sea and landscape, admirably aided by two academies — the Savage and the Sailor. His noble creation of Leather-Stocking is a work apart. Not understanding English I cannot judge of the style of these two great geniuses, happily for us so different, but I should suppose the Scotchman to be superior to the American in the expression of his thought and in the mechanism of his style. Cooper is illogical; he proceeds by sentences which, taken one by one, are confused, the succeeding phrase not allied to the preceding, though the whole presents an imposing substance. To understand this criticism read the first two pages of the "Pathfinder" and examine each proposition. You will find a muddle of ideas which would bring *pensums* upon any rhetoric pupil in France. But the moment the majesty of his Nature lays hold of you, you forget the clumsy lurching of the vessel, you think only of the ocean or the lake. To sum up once more: one is the historian of Nature, the other of humanity; one attains to the glorious ideal by imagery, the other by action, though without neglecting poesy, the high-priestess of art.

[WALTER SCOTT.]

It is twelve years since I have been saying of Walter Scott what you have now written to me. Beside him, Lord Byron is nothing, or almost nothing. But you are mistaken as to the plot of "Kenilworth." To the minds of all makers of romance, and to mine, the plot of that work is the grandest, most complete, most extraordinary



of all; the book is a masterpiece from this point of view, just as "St. Ronan's Well" is a masterpiece for detail and patience of finish, as the "Chronicles of the Canon-gate" are for sentiment, as "Ivanhoe" (the first volume, be it understood) is for history, "The Antiquary" for poesy, and "The Heart of Midlothian" for profound interest. All these works have their own especial merit, but genius shines throughout them all. Scott will still be growing greater when Byron is forgotten: I speak of Byron translated; for the poet in the original must last, if only for his form and his powerful inspiration. Byron's brain had never any other imprint than that of his own personality; whereas the whole world has posed before the creative genius of Scott and has there, so to speak, beheld itself.

[VICTOR HUGO.]

I have just finished reading M. Victor du Hamel's "La Ligue d'Avila," and I only went to the end of it for conscience' sake. Conceive that he calls "that cold and dreamy Germany" the bellicose and turbulent country which turned Europe upside down in the sixteenth century, which sent her warriors to every war, which invented gunpowder, printing, and Luther, three black things with which she changed the face of the world, religious, military, and civil! Art has its optics; the romance-writer looks at his subject with an opera-glass; the opera-glass has two ends. M. du Hamel looks at great events through the little end. Criticism is kingship; where there is nothing, it has no rights.

How many reflections come into one's mind in passing from such a work to a book of poems by M. Hugo! I have been sitting here an hour, asking of Science, of Nature, of God the meaning of the difference in brains, souls, faculties. The word "republic" in letters is nonsense; there will never be equality.

M. Hugo is, assuredly, the greatest poet of the nineteenth century. If I had the power I would offer him honours and riches, inviting him to write an epic poem. But where is the Augustus for Virgil, the Alexander for Aristotle, the François I. for Rabelais? We are no longer, alas! — to cite his own line — in days when

“Amid great kings grow the great poets.”

Admiration does not shut my eyes. There is in M. Hugo a wilful, dominating form, a sort of monotony in the conception which I should like to see disappear: numbers are not with him simply a form of rhetoric, they have become a means of manifesting thought, nay, they give birth to the conception itself. M. Victor Hugo can only progress now by a poem. In the execution of a grandiose work now lacking to France and which he can give to her — either in the grotesque form chosen by Ariosto, in which he would excel, or in the heroic form of Tasso — he will be well served by the special turn that his poesy takes, by his admirable feeling for imagery, by the richness of his palette, by his power of description.

All is fantasy in the book before me, “*Rayons et Ombres*,” charming arabesques in which there is nothing to blame or criticise. Caprice is the freest thing in literature. But as, for once, the critics have given unanimous praise to the great poet, I shall venture to twit him for faults of grammar which he ought not to commit, and for blunders like the following: —

“Lizard, running in the moonlight in the depths of a deep drain  
[*puisard*].”

When M. Hugo finds lizards in damp places he will have made a precious discovery worthy of being transmitted to the Museum, which will then be obliged to admit a new species. I mention this error because already, in “*Notre Dame*,” Esmeralda gives bread to swal-

lows. I dwell the more on these faults because, as I think, M. Hugo never reached so much suavity, delicacy, finish, grandeur, and simplicity as in several of the poems in this collection; in which, without intending to take Racine for a model, he has surpassed him. That which, up to the present time, has been the sacred ark of French poesy is, undoubtedly, the chorus in "Esther" and in "Athalie" ("I have seen the wicked adored upon this earth," etc.); but the first piece in this volume, entitled "The Function of the Poet," is superior in thought, imagery, and expression to those chants which Voltaire proclaimed to be inimitable.

What is surprising in M. Hugo is his comprehension of all forms. He is our greatest lyric poet. That quality alone won him the unanimous vote of the Academy; but he possesses also the fantastic gifts of the muses of the middle ages; he has the secret of the many forms of the troubadours and romancers; he can pour from his powerful lips a rustic pastoral in the style Marotic; he can play with rhyme and language like the poets of the sixteenth century; he could sing you a song better than Béranger, if he chose. Consequently, I regret that he has not, following Goethe's example, written a tragedy of a classic character, in which he would be restrained into the severe system of thought and versification seen in "Britannicus" or "Cinna." He would thus have shut the mouths of certain critics.

Usually M. Hugo manifests his thought with great clearness; his prose is worthy of his poesy; it is admirable; but in this volume the preface is written in phrases that are partly nebulous and partly brilliant, and with a certain prophetic tone that disturbs me. Many sentences seem to be the conclusion of long dissertations afterwards suppressed by the writer. This curious preface ends thus: "The mind of man has three keys which open all things: number, letter, note [*le chiffre, la lettre, la note*].

To know, to think, to dream — all is there." I am ashamed to own to you that I cannot see the slightest relation between those fine words and the poems in the volume. M. Hugo is, personally, full of these compendious sayings of Olympian grandeur; they abound in his conversation. He is one of the wittiest men of our day; his mind charms you. In material things he has the good sense, the rectitude that the world denies to writers and ascribes to ninnies chosen by election to be legislators; as if men who are accustomed to deal with ideas knew nothing of facts! Whoso can the more, can also the less. M. Hugo, like M. de Lamartine, may some day avenge himself for the ceaseless insults cast by the bourgeoisie upon literature. If he enters politics you may feel sure in advance that he will carry into them special gifts. His aptitude is universal; his shrewdness equals his genius; but, unlike our present statesmen, he is shrewd with nobleness and dignity. As for his elocution, it is marvellous; he will make the best committee-reporter that could be wished; his mind is clairvoyant. Perhaps you are not aware that two of his publishers are elected to the Chamber, and he is not! What admirable times we live in! The author of the "Social Contract" would probably not be a deputy, but they might have him up before the police-court.

Read, if you can get it, a collection of sonnets by Comte Ferdinand de Grammont. This young poet has judged his epoch so well that he *gives* his first essays clandestinely. There is something graceful in this behaviour of a young muse avoiding shop and noise, as M. Ballanche did at first. It is a coquetry that is only becoming, however, to handsome women: *fugit ad salices*. I shall tell you nothing about the sonnets, in order to leave you the pleasure of a surprise.

[PASCAL (BLAISE).]

I don't know what saints and bishops have done to that terrible M. Sainte-Beuve, but for silly stupidities long fallen into the sea of oblivion, he has the divining instinct of an old woman for secrets. In order to fully explain M. François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, he has recourse to Pascal and lays his hand on a blunder of that writer — for there is more than one in the famous *Pensées* of that great man. Here is the thought:

“I do not admire a man who possesses a virtue in its full perfection, if he does not possess at the same time, and in an equal degree, the opposite virtue; such as Epaminondas, who had extreme valour joined to extreme benignity; otherwise that man does not rise, he falls. We never rise to grandeur from one extremity; only by touching both at the same time and thus covering the *space between*.”

M. Sainte-Beuve entitles his chapter (of forty pages) “Saint François de Sales completed — the *space between* of Pascal.” He finds that “space between” in François de Sales.

I know nothing more false than Pascal's proposition. His name does not frighten me. Pascal had the just claim of being a good Catholic, therefore to him this question ought to be either religious or social. There is but one virtue, which the Roman Church, with a species of trinitarian thought, has cut into three — faith, hope, and charity. So much for the religious question. As for the social question, if we go into purely philosophical reasoning, the opposite of virtue is vice. There is no virtue that has its opposite virtue. Extreme valour is not the opposite of benignity; and will any one tell me the virtuous opposite of equity, repentance, chastity? The valour of Epaminondas is a purely human convention likely to change according to climate; so is benignity.

Pascal has taken for virtues moral qualities, ticketed by societies for their own needs.

No, God does not demand of men this balancing on a tight-rope with a virtue in each hand. The mathematical equipollence wanted by Pascal would make a man nonsense. If the civil list were as liberal as it is economical it could spend the whole year, seated on its money, and enjoying the equal pleasure of giving and getting back. Pascal forgot that as to morals there is nothing absolute in society, whereas all is absolute in the Church. Consequently, if he argues catholically he commits heresy; but if he comes upon rational human ground his thought is false. His "admirable" man would simply realize what we imagine God to be, namely: a being equal to himself in force upon all points of the circumference.

[HENRI BEYLE — FRÉDÉRIC STENDHAL.]

In our day literature has, very evidently, three faces, and far from being a symptom of decadence, this triplicity (an expression forged by M. Cousin out of hatred to the word "trinity") it seems to me is the natural effect of the abundance of our literary talents. This is to the honour of the nineteenth century, which no longer offers one and the same form as did the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; both of which were more or less obedient to the tyranny of a man or a system.

These three forms, faces, or systems, whichever it pleases you to call them, are in nature, and they correspond to general sympathies which were certain to declare themselves in a period when letters find that, through the broader diffusion of ideas, the number of appreciators is increasing and that general reading is making unheard-of progress.

In all generations and among all peoples there are elegiac, meditative minds, contemplators, who turn more



especially to grand images, to vast spectacles of nature, which they transport into themselves. Hence a school which I shall choose to call *the literature of imagery*; to it belong the lyric and the epic, and all else that depends on that method of viewing things.

Contrary to this, there are other active souls who love rapidity, movement, shocks, action, drama, who flee discussion, have little taste for revery, and delight in results. Hence quite another system, from which issues what I shall call, in opposition to the first, *the literature of ideas*..

Finally, certain rounded and completed beings, certain *bifrons* intellects, embracing all, want lyric and action, drama and ode, believing that perfection requires a sense of the total. This school, which must be named that of *literary eclecticism*, demands a representation of the world as it is: images and ideas; the idea in the image, or the image in the idea, movement, and revery. Walter Scott satisfied completely these eclectic natures.

Which party predominates I do not know. I do not wish that any one should infer forced consequences from these natural distinctions. These three formulas are to be applied only to the general impression left by the work of the poets, the mould into which a writer casts his thought, the trend along which his mind is moving. All imagery responds to an idea, or, more exactly, to a *sentiment*, which is a collection of ideas, and the idea does not always end in an image. The idea requires a toil of development which does not suit all minds. For this reason imagery is essentially popular, and is easily understood. Suppose that M. Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame de Paris" had appeared at the same time as "Manon Lescaut;" "Notre Dame" would seize the minds of the masses far more quickly than "Manon," and would seem therefore to be far superior in the eyes of those who kneel before the *vox populi*.

Nevertheless, whatever the species from which a work proceeds, it remains in the human memory only by obeying the laws of the ideal and the laws of form. In literature image and idea correspond fairly well to what in painting is called drawing and colour. Rubens and Raffaele are two great painters; but he would be strangely mistaken who thought Raffaele no colourist; and those who would deny that Rubens could draw had better go and kneel before the picture which the great Fleming painted for the church of the Jesuits in Genoa.

M. Beyle, better known under the pseudonym of Stendhal, is, to my thinking, one of the most distinguished masters of the *literature of ideas*, to which belong also MM. Alfred de Musset, Mérimée, Léon Gozlan, Béranger, Delavigne, Gustave Planche, Mme. de Girardin, Alphonse Karr, Charles Nodier. Henry Monnier is connected with it by the truth of his proverbs, often devoid of an *idée mère*, but none the less full of naturalness and that strict observation which is one of the characteristics of the school.

This school, to which we owe already so many noble works, recommends itself by the abundance of its facts, the sobriety of its images, by concision, clearness, the "little phrase" of Voltaire, by a method of narration that belonged to the eighteenth century, and, quite especially, by a sense of the comic. M. Beyle and M. Mérimée, in spite of their profound gravity, have something, I can hardly tell what, that is ironical and bantering in the way they state their facts. In them, however, the comic is restrained; it is fire under stones. . . .

I shall never cease to repeat that truth of nature cannot be, and never will be, the truth of art; and that if art and nature meet in perfection in a work it is because nature, whose changes are innumerable, has arrived at the conditions of art. The genius of the artist consists in choosing the natural circumstances which become the

elements of literary truth, and if he does not wisely weld them, if these metals do not make a statue of even tone in a single casting, his work is a failure.

M. Victor Hugo is certainly the most eminent talent in the *literature of imagery*. M. de Lamartine belongs to this school, which M. de Chateaubriand held at the baptismal font and the philosophy of which was created by M. Ballanche. Obermann is of it, so are MM. Auguste Barbier, Théophile Gautier, and Sainte-Beuve, with many others who are impotent imitators. In some of those I have just named sentiment supersedes imagery at times, as in M. de Senancour and M. Sainte-Beuve. M. de Vigny is attached to this great school, but more by his poetry than by his prose. All these poets have little sense of the comic, they ignore dialogue — with the exception of M. Théophile Gautier, who has a keen sense of it. The dialogue of M. Hugo is too much his own speech; he does not transform himself sufficiently; he puts himself into his personage instead of becoming that personage. But this school, like the other, has produced noble works. It is remarkable for the poetic amplitude of its phraseology, the richness of its imagery, its poetic language, its intimate union with nature. The other school is human, this is divine in the sense that it tends to rise through feeling to the very soul of creation. It prefers nature to man. From it the French language has received the strong dose of poesy which it needed, for it has developed the poetic sentiment so long resisted by the *positivism* (forgive me the word) of our language, and the dryness it inflicted on the writers of the eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre have been the promoters of this revolution, which I regard as most fortunate.

The secret of the struggle between the classicists and the romanticists lies altogether in this natural division of intellects. For two centuries the literature of ideas

reigned exclusively; the heirs of the eighteenth century took the only literary system they knew anything about as the whole of literature. We ought not to blame them, these defenders of the classic. The literature of ideas, full of deeds, compact, is in the genius of France. The "Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar," "Candide," "The Dialogue of Sylla and Eucrates," "The Provinciales," "Manon Lescaut," "Gil Blas," are more in the true French spirit than is the literature of imagery. But we owe to the latter the poesy which the two preceding centuries never so much as suspected — if we put aside La Fontaine, André Chénier, and Racine. The literature of imagery is in its cradle, but it counts already many men whose genius is incontestable. Seeing how many the other school can count, I believe more in the grandeur than in the decadence of our noble language. When the struggle ends we shall probably say that the romanticists have not invented any new method; that on the stage those who complain of lack of action have amply used tirade and monologue; and that we have not yet heard the lively, rapid dialogue of Beaumarchais, nor the comic element of Molière, which proceeded always from reason and ideas. The comic is the enemy of meditation and picturesqueness.

M. Hugo has won enormously in this struggle; but educated people remember the fight made against M. de Chateaubriand under the Empire; it was quite as bitter but sooner appeased because M. de Chateaubriand was alone, without the *stipante catervâ* of M. Hugo, without the antagonism of the newspapers, and without the support furnished to the romanticists by the fine geniuses of England and Germany, more known and better appreciated.

As for the third school, which derives from the two others, it has not as many chances as they to impassion the masses, which never like middle paths or composite

things, and which regard eclecticism as an arrangement contrary to their passions inasmuch as it tends to calm them. France likes war in everything. In peace she still fights. Nevertheless writers of this school — Walter Scott, Mme. de Staël, Cooper, George Sand — seem to me sufficiently great geniuses. As for me, I range myself under the banner of literary eclecticism for the following reason: I consider that the painting of modern society is not possible by the rigid system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The introduction of the dramatic element, imagery, picturesqueness, description, dialogue, seems to me indispensable in modern literature. Let us frankly acknowledge that *Gil Blas* is fatiguing as to form. The heaping up of events and ideas has a certain sterility.

The “*Chartreuse de Parme*” is of our epoch, and up to the present time it is, in my opinion, the masterpiece of the literature of ideas. M. Beyle has made concessions to the two other schools, which are admissible to sensible minds, and satisfying to the two camps. If I have delayed speaking of this book in spite of its importance it is that I found it hard to attain a sort of impartiality. And I am not certain now of keeping it, so extraordinary do I find this work on a slow, reflective third reading.

There is infinite sweetness in admiration when conscience makes it legitimate. What I shall say here I address to pure and noble hearts who, in spite of sad declamations, exist in all lands like unnamed pleiades, hidden among families of souls devoted to the culture of art. Humanity, from generation to generation, has possessed its constellations of souls, its heaven, its angels, to use the favourite term of the great Swedish prophet, an *élite* people, for whom true artists work; and whose judgments make even poverty, the insolence of parvenus, and the indifference of the government endurable . . . [Here follows a very long and minute analysis of the “*Chartreuse de Parme*.”]

The weak side of this work is its style, so far at least as the arrangement of words; for the thought, eminently French, sustains the sentence. . . . M. Beyle writes somewhat in the style of Diderot, who was no writer at all; but the conception is grand and strong, the thought original, and often well-rendered. His system, however, is not to be imitated. It would be too dangerous to let novelists fancy themselves profound thinkers. M. Beyle saves himself by the profound sentiment which animates all his thought. Those to whom Italy is dear, who have studied her and understood her, will read the "*Chartreuse de Parme*" with delight. The mind, the genius, the soul, the ways of that beautiful country live in this long, winning drama, in this vast fresco so finely painted, so strongly coloured, which stirs the heart profoundly and satisfies the most exacting spirit.

I had met M. Beyle only twice in society in a dozen years until the moment when I took the liberty of complimenting him on the "*Chartreuse de Parme*," one day when I met him accidentally on the Boulevard des Italiens. His conversation does not belie the idea I had formed of him from his works. He relates with the same wit and grace that are possessed in a high degree by Charles Nodier and M. de Latouche. He is very like the latter in a certain seductiveness of speech; although his physique (he is very fat) is at first sight the contrary of delicacy and elegance; but a moment later he triumphs over this first impression, like Doctor Koreff, Hoffmann's friend. He has a noble brow, a keen and piercing eye, a sardonic mouth; in fact, he has the physiognomy of his talent. He shows in conversation that enigmatical turn, that oddity of mind which leads him never to sign the already illustrious name of Beyle, but to call himself one day Cotonnet, another day Frédéric and so on. He is, they tell me, a nephew of the celebrated toiler, Daru, Napoleon's right arm. M. Beyle was therefore, natur-



ally, employed by the Emperor. 1815 necessarily turned him out of his career. He went from Berlin to Milan; and it is to the contrast that then struck him between the life of the North and that of the South that we owe his writings. His works are numerous, and are all remarkable for delicacy of observation and abundance of ideas. Nearly all concern Italy. He was the first to give exact information on the terrible trial of the Cenci; but he has not sufficiently explained the causes of the execution, which was quite independent of the trial and was forced on by factions instigated by cupidity. His book "*De l'Amour*" is superior to that of M. de Senancour; he joins forces with the great doctrines of Cabanis and the *École de Paris*; but he sins by the same want of method which I have mentioned in the "*Chartreuse de Parme*." He risked in this little treatise the word and the idea of *crystallization* to explain the phenomenon of the birth of the sentiment of love which so many have used since in derision, but which will always last, because of its profound accuracy.

[TO M. HENRI BEYLE, PARIS.]

Ville d'Avray, April 6, 1839.

MONSIEUR, — We should never delay giving pleasure to those who give us pleasure. "*La Chartreuse de Parme*" is a great and noble book. I say this without flattery and without envy, for I should be incapable of writing it, and we can frankly praise that which is not in our line. I do frescos and you do Italian statues. There is *progress* in all that we owe to you. You know what I have already said to you about "*Le Rouge et le Noir*." Well, *this* book is wholly original and new.

My praise is unstinted, sincere. I am the more delighted to write you what is on this page because others, called intelligent, seem dropping into a state of literary

senility. That stated, here follow a few observations — not criticisms.

You have made a great mistake in placing the tale at Parma. You should never have named the state or town, but left the imagination to find the Prince of Modena and his minister, or others. Hoffmann would not have failed to obey that law, which is without exception in the rules of romance-writing — he, the most fantastic of writers. Leave things undecided and they become realities; call the place Parma and minds will not agree with what you say.

There is prolixity, but I do not blame that; it never troubles intelligent minds, superior men; they are for you, and they like it; but I speak for the *pecus*; he will keep aloof. There is no prolixity after the first volume. This time you are perfectly clear. Ah! it is beautiful, like Italy itself; if Machiavelli could have written a tale in our day, it would have been the “Chartreuse.”

I have never in my life written many letters of eulogy, therefore you may believe what I find pleasure in saying. If the superiority of your book brings it quickly to a second edition, you ought to have the courage to add certain necessary developments at the end, while suppressing the prolixities of the beginning. The end comes too abruptly, in view of Tasso and his magnificences. The physical side is wanting in the painting of several of the personages; but that’s a mere nothing; a few touches would give it.

You have explained the soul of Italy.

You see I am not vexed with you for the falsehood you wrote in my copy, though it brought a few clouds to my brow; for, not fearing that you will take me for a common man, I must say to you that I know in what I am lacking, and you know it too — it is of that you ought to speak to me. You see I treat you as a friend.

*Pavilion in Rue Cassini, where Balzac lived in 1830.*









V.

LITERATURE AND ART.

*Charlet, Henri Monnier, Gavarni. Paul-Louis Courier. Victor Hugo: Hernani. Memoirs of Dangeau. Saint Paul. The Priest. Brillat-Savarin. The Society of the Gens de Lettres.*

[CHARLET, HENRI MONNIER, GAVARNI.]

1830.

IN all imaginations, in every French memory, there has remained, in the heart of hearts, the magic image of a giant five feet tall. Surrounded by imperial splendour or by broken eagles, by the smoke of cannon or the palm-trees of St. Helena, Bonaparte, consul, emperor, has risen up, evoked by a word, a name, or a memory.<sup>1</sup> Around him were ever those grave, silent figures, blue uniforms tarnished with battle, crippled soldiers, French, Italian, Belgian, returning from Egypt, Moscow, Cabrera, or the English prisons. That crowd received from this one man, as trees from the sun, a light which distinguished them from all others; and although they afterwards became labourers, coachmen, blacksmiths, never did commonness attain those common men: they were within the people as a people apart, with their religion and their morals, their soldierly resignation and bravery. July 1830 saw them again.

The genius of one man comprehended under the Restoration this poetic, people's world, both grand and simple,

<sup>1</sup> See Balzac's account of the last review in the Carrousel, page 61 of the Memoir attached to the present edition, and the "Story of the Emperor" in the "Country Doctor." — TR.

and, above all, it did not ignore the comic contrast presented by the Bourbon army caracoling amid these human relics. As painter, poet, historian, Charlet became the Homer of that portion of France. [Nicolas Toussaint Charlet, painter and lithographer, 1792-1845.] Beside these creations, at once burlesque and sublime, this man's rare talent has grouped *the world of children*. Which of us can ever forget those fresh and graceful scenes, those delicious naïvetés, which captivate even a recalcitrant bachelor. Charlet, by special privilege of nature, can pass from the vigorous tones of the old veteran of the Empire, threatening with his only remaining fist the Tuileries, the siege of which he predicts, to the delicate soft tones of the child, looking up at him and lisping: "Is it true you was born with a wooden leg?" Charlet has put in evidence two types which immortalize him: the soldier, the child — the child, almost always a soldier in France, and the soldier so often a child, full of a child's frankness and naïveté.

Another man, as surprising perhaps, more bitter, nearly as clever, whose talent you do not know unless you have seen the immensity of his resources in the studio where he prepares his pictures, a man, an artist if ever there was one, said to himself on observing clerks, grisettes, silly folk and M. Prudhomme: "This world is mine, my property, my chattels!"

Henri Monnier (oh, ye idlers on the boulevards! which of you does not know him?) knew, as by instinct, how to seize the manners, morals, attitudes, swing, language, secrets of those natures so diverse and so picturesque. He has made himself a special man like Charlet, like Hogarth, like Callot [painter and engraver, 1592-1635]. Inimitable, like them, he has created, and launched into intellectual circulation, living beings who would have been lost without him, borne away by the torrent of ages. These beings are his, they belong to him, for the slightest

admirer of these two geniuses invariably says: "A gri-sette of Henri Monnier — one of Charlet's children."

The talent of these two caricaturists, eminently popular, has for basis the most sagacious observation of *classes*; from that of the bourgeois who dress their children as lancers to that of the ninnies of whom M. Prudhomme is the most complete type. They have understood all the resources of physiognomy, manners, features, clothing, deportment; and yet, without desiring to diminish their undeniable merit, we venture to say that their task was an easy one. They found so many salient angles and flat planes, so many striking, we might almost say gross differences in figures and faces, that it sufficed them to see these original types to become themselves original.

This reflection leads me to desire to do justice to another artist, less celebrated, but quite as able as these two great men in the popular gallery. I mean Gavarni. [S. P. Chevalier, 1801-1866.]

To make Gavarni's merits understood I have had to describe in a sort of way the manner of both Charlet and Henri Monnier, and to give an account of their resources. And now, in the first place, let me say that during the first year of its life *La Mode* [Émile de Girardin's paper, with which Balzac was connected; it was the first periodical to accept his work; "El Verdugo" was published by it in October, 1829] — *La Mode* knocked at the doors of all studios. I need not name the many artists who failed in the execution of the particular drawings wanted; but it was then, in comparing so many diverse productions, that I learned to appreciate myself the immense difficulties of this style of work. In fact, though *La Mode* could easily create a literature charged with watching the variations of Paris, it is certain that Parisian physiognomies, turns of the head, poses of women, attitudes of elegant men, secrets of the boudoir, were all still awaiting a painter; and in presence of a blasé public, accustomed

to the mediocrity of our rivals' figurines, it was almost a hopeless attempt to produce one.

There exists, in the world of clothes, in the manner with which a woman noted for taste carries herself, walks, moves, an indescribable style which a dozen pages could not explain and which is difficult indeed for the pencil or brush to seize. This style, whatever it be, is the stamp of classes. In the classes heretofore named it immortalized Charlet and Henri Monnier; but when Gavarni came out with his chosen class what did he get for it? — for a long time nothing but cold indifference. High society goes to the *Variétés* to escape its own salons; it laughs and diverts itself in seeing the People. There, it is indulgent and appreciative; whereas it is severe to those who reproduce itself. It will criticise itself pitilessly, and the artist who, in other fashion journals, designs a lay figure and drapes a gown upon it comes nearer to its ideas than Gavarni endeavouring to paint the delicate shades and fugitive lineaments of high-bred physiognomy.

But now, as I write, his efforts are on the point of being rightly rewarded. If I have not spoken earlier in favour of his drawings it was because we have not succeeded until now in arousing attention to his work, and had I praised it sooner my eulogy would have been accused of self-interest. At the present moment what I say accords with the voice of some artists and with that of men and women of society who have all, at last, admitted the superiority of their painter.

Until now, drawings of manners, customs, and fashions have been considered by editors as matters of small importance, and setting aside a few drawings of Horace Vernet, they have had no other purpose than to represent a gown, a ribbon, a cape. M. de la Mésangère existed upon this. Later the *Petit Courrier des Dames* felt the necessity of drawing fashions in such a way that far in the

depths of the provinces a clever woman could see the cut, the breadths, the points of a gown, and decompose, so to speak, a Parisian garment in order to reproduce it faithfully upon herself.

But we alone have understood that it belonged to France to put a higher art into a journal of fashion and luxury; we have endeavoured to unite to the pattern of a coat buttoned on the stiff lay-figure of M. de la Mésangère the instructions of the *Petit Courrier* and to add to that combination a real personage, of life, of feeling; never inflicting on the provinces that doll of fashions which, for twenty years, has had the exclusive honour of representing Parisians.

None but an artist, and a superior artist, could adopt our idea and faithfully produce that Parisian physiognomy, so eminently mobile, so inquiring, or give the spirit of a garment, the thought of a gown, the grace of a kerchief — a kerchief which has no grace except by the way it is worn! It was by his understanding of our idea that Décamps made us know for the first time, through his sketches, the physiognomy of Orientals.

But before we ventured to render the types of the class “elegant” it must be owned that we tried many pencils, and for seven or eight months at least our efforts were unfortunate. The plates attached to those numbers are remarkably defective. The engraver often removed all the charm of a drawing by M. Fontallard in his endeavour to attain the perfection of which we dreamed. The public never recognized the merits of MM. Tony Johannot and Ziegler in the unfaithful copies we gave of their charming designs.

At last, during the winter of 1829–30, we obtained and presented for admiration a series of plates purporting to be costumes for fancy-balls. Here were really men and women. We could divine their characters, their manners, their morals, their motions, under the *basquina*

of the Andalusian, the waistcoat of the Irishman; and all so marvellously drawn and coloured! The garments were really of silk and gauze! A man had conceived of fashion-plates as an intellectual specialty. Our idea had entered the brain of an artist; and we soon found that this artist would devote himself to the task of copying, seizing, creating the great world of fashion, just as Henri Monnier and Charlet had produced from the void soldiers, grisettes, children, and ninnies. Encouraged by our praise and by our sacrifices, Gavarni consented to superintend the work of the engraver, and before long his designs, better reproduced, amazed the public. The exhibition of his original drawings in the Colbert Museum has sealed the reputation of our witty collaborator.

I am certain that these drawings will in coming years give the pictured history of the good society of our day, and that they will be as much sought after by amateurs as this or that work of painters and engravers.

[PAUL-LOUIS COURIER.]

The delightful pamphlets of Courier, read after the circumstances which called them forth and made them comprehended, have some resemblance to the sticks of exploded rockets. This portion of the works of that remarkable man could never be popular. There is something too elevated in that concise style of his, too vigorous in his Rabelaisian thought, too ironical in his depths and in his form, for Courier to please many minds. He has written the "*Satire Menippée*" of our epoch.

The translation of the "*Vigneron de la Chavonnière*" is a more solid title to fame. The system of which he gives a specimen in his "*Essay of Herodotus*" will always prevail among true scholars.

His Correspondence is worthy of an erudite man and a pamphleteer. It is inquiring, instructive, and full of the



Franklin good sense which distinguished his fine genius. It is a misfortune for France that Courier did not have time to do a complete *work* which would have immortalized his name.

As it is, his Works will not be reprinted; but they will always be sought for and bought by men of taste and learning. The number of such refined connoisseurs, the *gourmets* of literature, will never be sufficient for Courier to receive other honours. Therefore the edition lately issued will bring enormous prices when we are to our grandsons what the wars of the League are to us. This is enough to say that the publishers have made an excellent speculation. Courier's Works will sell slowly, but they will sell to their last copy. They have, moreover, an attraction of which the bibliophile can have no idea until he goes himself to the publisher to buy the book.

[VICTOR HUGO : *HERNANI*.]

1830.

If M. Victor Hugo were not, in spite of himself perhaps, the leader of the new school I would not judge summarily of this work; but his name is a standard, his work the expression of a doctrine, and he himself a sovereign. It is all the more useful therefore to judge conscientiously of this drama, because, if the author is in a wrong path many men of talent will follow him, and we shall lose masterpieces while he loses fame.

All the newspapers have given you an analysis of "*Hernani*;" I shall therefore excuse myself from dissecting the subject. My criticism will be addressed as it were to the author himself and to those who have profoundly studied his play. Let us first examine the behaviour of each personage, then the *ensemble* of the drama and its object; and afterwards ask ourselves whether this work has made an advanced step in the dramatic art; and, if it has, in what direction.

Charles V. (Don Carlos) being evidently the leading part in the play, I devote myself first to an analysis of that personage. [Here follows a long and minute discussion.]

Is that Charles V.? Good God! where did Victor Hugo study history? Is there anything in this *structure* which denotes a real knowledge of that royal soul? Let M. Hugo go to the Musée, or to the gallery of the Duc d'Orléans; let him stand but a minute before the portrait of Charles V., and he may perhaps acknowledge to himself that it is impossible to even attribute to that personage a single one of the actions and words he has given him. I except a few thoughts in the monologue.

A drama is the expression of a human passion, an individuality, or some great deed. "Phèdre" is an example of a drama expressing passion; "Henry IV.," "Henry V.," or "Richard III." are examples of the drama expressing individuality. In the one example and in the others the genius of two poets has portrayed, originally, a human life, whether Racine idealized it or whether Shakespeare gives it humanly with all its shades. Schiller, in "William Tell," represents a deed, with its accessories: men, passions, interests. All three geniuses have attained the end which art is bound to propose to itself. But in "Hernani" the character of Charles V. belongs to none of these theories. It expresses neither passion, character, nor events. He might just as well be named Louis XIV. or Louis XV. Perhaps, after all, Victor Hugo merely intended to formulate royalty. . . .

If the author had intended to make Don Ruy a living image of death, mowing down with his scythe the spring-tide joys of youth and love, the fifth act might have offered some salient beauty; but that was not his thought. Who is the personage whose interests we ought to espouse? Is it Doña Sol? Her character has nothing very salient about it. She loves Hernani, but her love is like all other loves. She repeats, from the first scene to

the last, that she wants her *dear* brigand, but she never takes a single step to unite her fate to his. Is it Hernani? A man without character, who puts on his hatred and takes it off like a coat. Is it Don Ruy? An old man who sleeps when he ought to be awake, who sells his services, buys human blood for the price of his love, sells it back for the blow of a dagger, and avenges himself ignobly on a happiness he can no longer enjoy. What is the mother-thought of this play? What conclusion does it draw? Is it the duty of scrupulously fulfilling promises? Well, that is good morality for these days.

If we come to examine the play under the head of invention, a well informed critic is at once struck with a general defect. The work is a medley of imitation [*pastiche*]. The fifth act is a faulty modification of the end of "Romeo." The scene of Charles V. in the tomb is that of "Cinna" barring the resemblance. Hernani coming, in the third act, to ask a pledge from Doña Sol is far below the finale of the "Bride of Lammermoor." Don Ruy discovering the love of Doña Sol is an imitation of "Françoise de Rimini." Charles V. in his closet is Nero hidden, excepting always the motive of terror. The play is therefore stricken with a leading blemish: it is common to others in all its parts; nothing is new. Hernani, prince and brigand, is a blunder; if he had been only a brigand he would not have been a new creation; as a prince, he resembles all others.

As for the style, I don't wish to concern myself with that, for the author's sake; though it might be useful to do so for the education of some persons who find in it a certain manliness and a Corneillian flavour. Perhaps you will accuse me of bringing out the defects of the work. I ought to; for the newspapers have one and all extolled its beauties.

I will sum up my criticism by saying that the springs of this play are worn out; the subject, if it rested on a

real fact, is inadmissible, because all its incidents are not susceptible of being dramatized; the characters are untrue; the conduct of the personages is contrary to common sense; and, in a few years, the admirers of this section of the trilogy which Victor Hugo promises will be much surprised to think that they were ever able to be impassioned by "Hernani." The author seems to me, so far, a better prose writer than poet, and more of a poet than dramatist. Victor Hugo never comes upon a natural trait except by chance; and therefore, unless by conscientious work and great docility to the advice of stern friends, the stage is forbidden ground to him. Between the preface to "Cromwell" and the drama of "Hernani" there is an enormous distance. "Hernani" is, at most, a subject for a ballad.

[MEMOIRS OF THE MARQUIS DE DANGEAU.]

Dangeau's Memoirs exist in the Bibliothèque Royale. Voltaire, Mme. de Genlis and Lemontey have given very interesting extracts from them, each in a different spirit. The publishing house of Mame and Delaunay-Vallée has undertaken to publish these Memoirs as a whole. The publication deserves to be commended. Dangeau wrote a minute journal of the events of the Court of Louis XIV., and he wrote it day by day. I know nothing more curiously interesting than such memoirs. The novel-writer, the historian, the dramatist would give all Anquetil for ten pages more of the *Journal de l'Estoile*. Dangeau's work is not susceptible of criticism. It is full of facts artlessly related. The editors aver that the annotator on the manuscript is no other than the Duc de Saint-Simon. This is an assertion which I shall examine when the work is finished. [It proved to be a true assertion.] I recommend to you this important publication, which adds to our treasury of Memoirs on the History of France.

## [THE EPISTLES OF SAINT PAUL.]

1834.

I hoped to find, on reading the Rev. Father Bernardin de Pecquigny's "Explanation of the Epistles of Saint Paul," researches both learned and interesting on that magnificent monument of the development of Christian doctrine. I thought that a catholic priest would develop in this analysis of Saint Paul's epistles an answer to the attacks or to the lofty disdain of unbelievers. He had only to profit by numerous works on the same topic, the triple Latin expositions and the commentaries of the Fathers and other theologians; the subject matter was thus prepared for him. But the Rev. Father has looked at it quite otherwise than, as I think, he ought to have done; the book he has now published is nothing more than a collection of oral instructions delivered by him in the pulpit on Saint Paul's epistles. The form of his work proves this. It is an analysis following the order and connection of the text, a paraphrase presenting the thought of the apostle, a commentary on the dogma, morals, and sentiments of piety.

This form strikes me as a defect; it obliges too much regularity and excludes, in consequence, the transport of passion which is essential to an artist in making an artist speak. For it is thus, in my opinion, that a priest should consider himself in relation to Saint Paul, and the mere reading of his Epistles will show it. The point of departure of the Christian religion are the Gospels, and the form given to that first revelation of the doctrines of Christ is wholly poetic. The expositions that followed have the same form; the most ancient of these are the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Saint Paul. It was not until later that the exposition became both poetic and philosophical; for though in Paul's Epistles we occasionally see the theologian, it is, as a general thing, the artist who dominates the whole. In fact, Paul had so

much of that passionate inspiration which constitutes an artist, that the peoples to whom he explained the Christian faith were as much influenced by the ardour of his words as they were by the power of his doctrine. There remain to us a few epistles by other apostles, but they do not present in the same degree that penetrating poesy of the soul, that love, that thirst for proselytizing, that faith in himself that we admire so in Saint Paul. More than all the other apostles he must have had the fervour which communicates itself so powerfully.

In his Epistles to Timothy we shall, especially, find him explaining how far his faith is superior to that of other teachers. He thanks God that, having sinned, he has had his eyes opened to the faith, that he has come to it through love, and that, unworthy though he be, he comprehends through divine mercy the object and end of faith. It is in this epistle that we see to what a point he understands that law of charity which he explains with such sympathy and grandeur. Sometimes he declaims against those vain teachers who busy themselves with the fables and genealogies of Judaism, and apply themselves more to interminable disquisitions than to the manifesting of God, who is the faith; teachers who seek to teach the doctrine without knowing it. Then he reminds that it consists in sincere faith, a good conscience, and the charity of a pure heart.

It is also in these Epistles to Timothy (admirable in the deepest feeling that ever animated the heart of man) that Saint Paul shows himself a sublime and truly divine artist. Perhaps he is so even more, at least with more suavity, in the Epistle to Philemon, returning one of the latter's slaves whom he had catechised. It is impossible to find anything more tender, more affectionate, and at the same time more ingeniously worded than this epistle. He is himself a prisoner, and he speaks of it repeatedly to make Philemon sympathize all the more with the situation of



the slave he returns to him ; he appeals to him for “ his son ” born during captivity ; he sends the man back and asks Philemon to receive, as he would himself, one whom he loves with his own bowels ; it is not a slave he sends him, it is a cherished brother, etc.

This is the first and the only time that the apostle speaks of slavery ; but these sublime words were to have a mighty future — they were the dawn of liberty which slavery was to owe to Christianity.

I regret to say that M. de Pecquincy has not understood this mission for the future which Saint Paul fulfilled ; at any rate, he has not shown it to his readers ; and yet, what better method for convincing could the Catholic priests of to-day adopt than to seek in the history of the first ages of the Church for the future destiny of the Church, and in the ages of her spiritual dominion for the services she has rendered to social order ? This was how de Maistre proceeded [Joseph de Maistre, 1754–1821]. In addressing the heart and the reason of men by a learned and intimate elaboration of the past he has convinced the most rebellious minds of, at least, the truth of his historical works, and he deserves the name given to him by the author of the “ *Social Palingenesis* ” — that of “ *Prophet of the past.* ”

Saint Paul was a prophet of the future ; a true apostle ; and in order to make worldly minds which treat Christianity so lightly share the admiration felt for the sublime mission of the first Christian artists, a writer should make known the barbarous manners and morals of the ancient peoples ; manners and morals which history covers with a glamour of glory, forcing them to appear uncoloured of their black and bloody tints through the brilliant veil thrown over them by the chroniclers of the past. By the side of the splendid painting those chroniclers have made of general institutions should be shown the hideous picture of individual baseness and suffering — man worked

by man as a beast of burden, without guarantee, without appeal against force; woman treated as a chattel, not redeeming herself even by the sentiment she inspires; inspiring no trust, no devotion; delivered over to lust and cupidity, or deprived of liberty; children exposed to the slightest caprice of the head of the house; dependent on his mercy for permission to live; the most sacred bonds of social order — marriage, birth, liberty, life itself sometimes — without guarantee and having no protection but the worth of the individual who contracted them.

This is what ought to be made known and understood in order to indicate the full value of the work of Saint Paul. That great man should be shown founding, in the future, a universal society, and preaching the noble bases of social order which the Christian Church was one day to realize. From his journeys should be drawn the sublime lesson that the earth has to be prepared to receive the seed of the Sacred Word, and to bear, in a coming day, the fruits of that Word. The great apostle should be pictured to us advancing through the harshest difficulties, the keenest sufferings, from Judea, which had furnished the God, through Greece, which had prepared the intellect, to Rome, which was to give both land and speech; and there, enduring martyrdom when his mission had attained its end.

What a sublime picture would be presented by an analysis thus conducted of his Epistles! The duties of marriage so admirably shown in the first epistle to the Corinthians, and in that to the Ephesians; the meeting at the same table of poor and rich; the Communion (first Corinthians); the duties of charity, the duties of priests and the ecclesiastical hierarchy (first Timothy); the deliverance of slaves and the sacred dogma of social equality (Philemon); the union under one law of all peoples and the equality of their deserts before God (Romans): what a future was foreshadowed in these paraphrases of one

idea, and what sublime completion of the Master's Word!

It is enough to read some of the noble sentences sown broadcast through this great work, and to feel the various and differing characteristics impressed upon its several parts — the severity and authority of first Corinthians; the consoling paternity of the second epistle; the sublime and powerful dialectic in Galatians and in the first part of Romans; the fervent piety, the ardour for martyrdom in Ephesians; the sweet and tender charity of the spiritual father, also in Ephesians; and lastly, the grandeur of views, the power of creative intellect in the two epistles to Timothy.

Have I not shown that an analysis of the Epistles of Saint Paul is still to make? I appeal to men who are meditating history to take up that important work. It is the point of departure of the development of Christian faith, and consequently, of the establishment of the social bond which has ruled Europe for centuries, and of which our present political institutions are but a derivation.

But the ungrateful child has cursed its mother; men who are so proud to-day of their civilization forget the great artists who founded it by their predictions and the sublime philosophers who constructed its base.

[THE PRIEST.]

Serious topics have, as the world goes, two mortal enemies — scoffers, and wearisome praisers; the first soil them with ignoble sarcasm, the latter send saints to sleep. The author of a book I have just been reading called "The Priest" belongs to the second category. The book is a strong proof that the Christian clergy of these days are incapable of fulfilling the sublime function of the priesthood; for evidently the author does not understand what it is. Each time that he wishes to put in a

strong light the superiority of the Christian faith it is its inferiority that he exhibits. This Catholic priest sees evil plainly enough and seeks to repair it, but he never thinks of preventing it; never has he an idea of going higher and farther to find its cause and endeavour to destroy it; in a word, he does what physicians call "symptom practice," and that is not what society in the present day requires: to cure her of her ills we need hygienists.

It is not by telling the poor that they must not imitate the luxury of the rich that you will make the poor class happy; it is not by telling young girls that they must not be seduced that you will stop prostitution: you might as well say, "You are not to have any needs but those you can satisfy, and when you have no bread you will be so good as not to be hungry." But Christian charity, people say to me, is given to us to repair all evils. To which I reply: Christian charity repairs very little, and prevents nothing. Attack the idleness of the rich and the immoral; there's the true cause of social sores; there, Christian teachers, is the point towards which you ought to direct your powers of eloquence, and all your religious courage. Destroy that ever-renascent hydra, every head of which is devouring millions of men; do this and you will become the true messenger of God, and you will no longer need to call to your assistance books as ill done as this that I have chanced to fall upon.

[BRILLAT-SAVARIN.]

Anthelme Brillat-Savarin was born at Belley, April 1, 1755. To judge only by first impressions, he was a most ordinary man: intrepid huntsman, passable musician, excellent guest, and agreeable talker; but nothing of all that would have brought him down to posterity; his contemporaries themselves would have forgotten him by this time were it not for the publication of a book, the "Physiology

of Taste," which, at the close of his life, gave him an undisputed reputation. The events of his life have in that way acquired the importance that belongs to the biographies of celebrated men, and they bear, besides, the imprint of the epoch in which he lived.

Born of a family long devoted to the judicial professions, Brillat was civil lieutenant to the justice court of his native town when the Revolution broke forth. He was sent in 1789 by the *tiers état* of Bugey to the States-General, where abler men than he were destined to remain in the shade. Coming up from his province with some predilection for ancient forms, but at heart devoid of all political or legislative principle with any aim, he never spoke unless upon insignificant details, or against the desires which social improvement rendered more and more imperious daily. When assignats were created, he urged the issue of notes of small amount; he was right there, and the measure was adopted later. He was not right when he opposed the institution of juries and when, May 30, 1791, in upholding the penalty of death, he denied that crimes were more frequent where laws were most severe, ending his speech thus: "If your committees think they show philosophy in advising you to abolish the death penalty, it is only by rejecting their proposal that you can prove that man's life is dear to you." The members of the Constituent Assembly not being re-eligible, Brillat did not belong to the Legislative Assembly; but his fellow-citizens gave him a proof of their esteem by conferring upon him the presidency of the civil courts of the department of the Ain; and, later, by making him judge of the Court of Appeals established by the constitution of 1791, which required that each department should be represented in this supreme court by a judge of its own choice nominated by its electors.

The resolution of August 10, 1792, deprived Brillat of this high post. Becoming mayor of Belley about the close

of 1793, he used his authority to check in that town the excesses of a bloodthirsty demagoguery; but the *conventionnel* Gouly, sent on a mission to the department, gave a decision which denounced Brillat to the Revolutionary tribunal as a federalist. He took refuge in Switzerland; but soon, the thirteen cantons offering no real security, he sailed for the United States and lived for three years in New York, supporting himself by giving French lessons and by playing in the orchestra of a theatre. During this time, his name was placed on the list of *émigrés* and his property confiscated. The memory of this period of calamity was never bitter to Brillat-Savarin; the facile gaiety with which he bore trouble proves that the philosophy which his pen has scattered here and there on his pages was not in him a showy falsehood, but the result of his actual practice. His keenest regrets were for the celebrated vineyard of Machura, which the Republic first sequestered and then sold.

Returning to Paris in 1796, Brillat-Savarin obtained the twofold satisfaction of having his name erased from the list of *émigrés* and of being himself replaced on that of waiting functionaries; but he did not recover his vineyard, for which he later made claims at the feast of indemnities. Receiving first the post of secretary to headquarters of the armies of the Republic in Germany, Brillat's friends in office soon obtained for him that of commissioner of the Directory to the tribunal of the Seine-et-Oise. (1797), whence he passed, under the Consulate, to the Court of Appeals, now completely reorganized. The last twenty-six years of his life went by in the discharge of these high functions, in which he gave ample proof of stern integrity, although he held to them as to life itself. The 18th Brumaire, the metamorphosis of a consulate into an empire, and the fall of Bonaparte, did not trouble his digestion. During the Hundred Days of 1815, he signed the Murair address, soiled with base insults against the



Bourbons. When Blücher and Wellington were in Paris he signed the de Sèze address, full of anathemas against the usurper. These mutations of thrones and sceptres are less important, no doubt, than the discovery of a star, and, in the words of a compatriot of Brillat, "the discovery of a star adds less to the sum of human happiness than the discovery of a new dish."

Brillat was thus enabled to respect in himself the irremovability of the magistracy, and he never quitted the fleurs-de-lis for the rest of his life. His devotion to his office was the cause of his death. Having taken a slight cold, he received, January 18, 1826, a letter from the chief-justice of the Court of Appeals, de Sèze, inviting him to take part in the *cérémonie expiatoire* of the 21st at the church of Saint-Denis. His cold was converted into pneumonia, and he died on the 2nd of February.

Brillat-Savarin presents one of those rare exceptions to the rule which deprives men of tall stature of great intellectual faculties. Though his height, almost colossal, gave him the look of drum-major to the Court of Appeals, he was a man of real mind and his work has literary qualities that are far from common. The "Physiology of Taste," written little by little and slowly elaborated in leisure hours, Brillat-Savarin nursed long, feeling toward it so tenderly that he took it with him to the law courts, where on one occasion it is said that he lost the manuscript—happily for us, recovered. The varied scheme or frame of the book shows, moreover, the work of an amused and happy pen which feels its power, and at the same time its right to be fantastic. Time and reflection could alone have revealed to this gastronomic genius the convivial, social, and other maxims with which the book is, as it were, striped—maxims so well formulated that most of them have become proverbs for gourmets, and take the place of wit in those who repeat them.

The reason of the rapid success of the "Physiology of

Taste" lies in the *savour* of its style. Since the sixteenth century, if we except La Bruyere and La Rochefoucauld, no prose writer had given to the French language so vigorous a relief; but what distinguishes Brillat's work more especially is the comic element beneath its *bonhomie* — a special characteristic of French literature in the great epoch which began when Catherine de' Medici came to France, and which lasted till her death. The "Physiology of Taste" will therefore please more on a second reading than at first. Whence comes this quality of charm, which art can never give, for it is inherent in man, though its fruits are never produced except by a long incubation of the mind? It comes from sincerity of conviction. Brillat is ~~no~~ cooking trumpeter. Do not take him for a Rabelais (who, however, never used but soberly "la dive bouteille"), nor for a Berchoux, who makes game of Apicius and Vatel, as of Dupont and Vestres — poets who laugh at the epics and blaspheme the altar. All such talkers about gastronomy lack the inspiration, the sacred fire, the *os magna voratorum*. Brillat had it more than amply. He writes with love; his words are solemn as the mass of a bishop; in his style the subject sparkles; all is glowing like the pupil of the eyes, like the carmine of the lips of a gourmand: whether he declaims, relates, argues, or sums up, commands or prohibits, he is ever the pontifical officer.

If we had never had wind of these interminable dinners, where certain choice friends alone were admitted, and from which a stern closed door excluded profane trilogies and sometimes tetralogies — feasts in which he took upon himself the task of applying his twentieth maxim ("To invite a person is to intrust ourselves with his happiness during the time he is under our roof") — had we never, I say, heard of these dinners, it would have been equally plain that for Brillat to eat to live or live to eat was all one, and that Molière talked nonsense. It is quite clear that

his dream, his ideal, his Paradise lost, was one of those luscious refectories of the monks, which he regrets so heartily that the Revolutionary hurricane blew down. It is very clear that his office, to which he clung with all his strength, was the means, his table the end. Sometimes, it is true, he laughs about it as he confabulates with his reader, but we must not be misled by that; when he does so, the joke is the fib; his gravity is the truth.

In all respects he is delighted with himself, convinced of his own merit, proudly donning the title of professor, and bringing himself upon the scene with a delicious naïveté of self-conceit. Nothing can be more intolerable as a general thing than I—I—the perpetual reappearance of egotism: that of Brillat is delightful. This is because he symbolizes the entire class of gourmets and gourmands, a numerous class of bipeds in whom prevails the digestive personality. La Fontaine, making his Captain Fox and Don Porker talk, yap, discourse, and run, does not catch us with a more invincible magnet than Brillat when he narrates his adventures, his exploits, his calamities. A smile of benevolence involuntary curls round the corners of his lips as he recalls to memory his pheasant shooting in the virgin forests of America, his victorious battle with two gentlemen whom he buries under punch, and the universal acclamations with which a new powdering apparatus of his invention, the *irrorator*, was received by all. He imagines, like Horace lauding Augustus, that he gives to each culinary artist whom he deigns to mention a brevet of immortality; he tells us that in 1776 he was largely in funds for affinities that were otherwise and more exacting than friendship; that in the year of grace 1825 he still had a slim leg, and though at all times he regarded his stomach as a formidable enemy, he had at last found means to make it majestic. All these trifles are told in a pure, concise, airy, picturesque style, limpid and laughing as mellow wine in coloured crystal.

Brillat is often a neologist, and those who share this taste ought to thank him as much as the gastronomists. He pleads their cause very cleverly in his preface; and he scatters through his work specimens that are not less appetizing than they are risky. What arguments in favour of neology can equal these charming words: *garrulité, truffivores, s'indigérer?* and even that Greco-Roman hybridism: *obésigène*. But nothing can be less retrograde than this adversary of juries when he deals with his favourite topic. The better to enjoy its delectations, the better to demonstrate its theories, he calls to his aid all tributary sciences; for science to his mind is worth nothing except as it contributes to his art. Botany, zoölogy, chemistry, agriculture, anatomy, medicine, hygiene, political economy, Brillat tastes of them all as he goes along, sure of capturing something, foot or wing, for his ovens; and as he well knows how to make all he says intelligible, the reader, as he turns the pages, thinks himself learned. The science whose oracles Brillat dictates is *physiology*; his chapters are *meditations*; his gastronomy (his own) is *transcendental* gastronomy; his precepts *aphorisms*: a veritable decalogue of gourmands, irrefragable as the laws of Kepler.

The merit of the "Physiology of Taste" is therefore a real thing; it must please people of good taste by the *vis comica* so rare in our epoch, when the literature of imagery is carrying the day against the literature of ideas, when the phrase is more than the thought. Also it must please the mass of readers by the elegant novelty of its facts, by its anecdotes of the *élite*, by a variety which makes the book a sort of *olla podrida* impossible to analyze, and, finally, by one of the most original arrangements of the text that an author ever devised.

The only blemish that I can find upon this Code Gourmand — and it is a blemish in our decorative age — is that of having, in his admiration of the contents, neglected

the container. Porcelains, crystals, silverware, have their poesy, as the period Louis XVIII. has not ignored. But perhaps the eminent professor did not wish to tell all, either to leave something to his descendants to tell, or because — as I incline myself to think — like the philosophers of ancient times he has his esoteric doctrine, and desired to die without revealing it. But however this may be, he has certainly left a good deal of himself in his book, and one is tempted to inscribe upon its binding, as on the sack of doubloons of the licentiate Pierre Garcias: “Here lies the soul of Brillat-Savarin.”

When the honourable judge of the Court of Appeals resolved to publish his meditations, and presented himself with that object to Sauvelet, there happened to his book that which almost invariably happens to all works of merit. The “Physiology of Taste” was not accepted, and the costs of the first edition were paid by the author, whose heir sold the remainder of it for a song. The book did not bear the name of the author, who thought the publication incompatible with the gravity of his office. We should be far indeed from the truth if we imagined that the gastronomic sincerity of Brillat-Savarin ever degenerated into intemperance. On the contrary, he declared formally that any one who *s’indigère* — indigests or intoxicates himself — does not know the *art of eating*. He everywhere distinguishes between the pleasures of the table and the pleasures of eating. In a word, he can fairly take for his motto the “Epicuri de grege” of Horace, but the melancholy spondee which ends that hemistich must not be given to it. His tone is a mixture of the Voltairean spirit and that elegant Aristippism which recalls, across the ice of our age and of revolutionary experience, the taste of the last century.

Brillat-Savarin was the author of other works, namely: “Views and Plans of Political Economy,” Paris, 1802; “Essay Historical and Critical, on Duelling,” 1819; “The

Archæology of the Department of the Ain," 1820; and a manuscript work entitled "Judiciary Theory." The "Physiology of Taste" has had several editions; the first in 1825, the last in 1834, in two volumes 8vo. Brillat-Savarin died at Villacrène, the house of his friend Baron Richerand, in 1826. The greater part of the "Physiology of Taste" was written in that house, as Brillat himself tells us. It was at Villacrène that the incident of the turbot happened; which the author relates with all the more solemnity because he was the hero of it—a narrative which his admirers have compared to the fourth satire of Juvenal.

[THE SOCIETY OF MEN OF LETTERS.]

[In 1838 Balzac sought admission to the *Société des Gens-de-lettres*, then a comparatively weak body. His inspiring presence soon gave it life, owing to his accurate knowledge of the business of publication, his ability in maintaining an author's rights, and, more especially, his conviction of the dignity of a man of letters. In the same year he was made president of the Society. In 1841 a committee was appointed to prepare a manifesto which should cover the whole ground of the condition of French literature, the services it had rendered to the nation and to history, the slight protection or even decent good-will the government of Louis Philippe gave to it, and the danger and shame to France of allowing such a state of things to continue. The *Société des Gens-de-lettres* proposed to present this manifesto to the two Chambers, and to print and scatter it broadcast through the country to obtain support. Balzac's draft of this document (which will be found in Vol. 22, Édition Définitive, page 297) not being accepted by his fellow-committeemen, he resigned from the Society in the autumn of that year, 1841. The following is a Code Littéraire



drawn up by him for the Society in May, 1840. A few of the unimportant clauses have been omitted here; their place will be noticed by the omission of the number.]

[LITERARY CODE.]

May, 1840.

*Section I. Literary Contracts.*

1. The members of the *Société des Gens-de-lettres* bind themselves not to make any contracts or bargains relating to the first publication of their works without first communicating the agreement to the agent of the Society. All contracts of this kind must be made in triplicate, and one copy deposited in the archives. They must be in conformity with the rules of literary law as expressed below.

2. The cession of a literary work of any kind is understood to be for one edition only, unless otherwise expressly stipulated.

3. Unless a literary work has been sold absolutely without any reserve, all editions, of any number, shall be considered exhausted at the end of ten years, and the author will re-enter upon his rights.

4. To be absolute, the sale of a literary work must be registered and contain the formal renunciation by an author of his rights.

5. The delivery of a manuscript by an author to a publisher for the purpose of printing does not give the publisher any proprietary rights over a manuscript, unless by express agreement.

6. [Relates to loss of manuscript.]

7. The number of copies to be printed in each edition shall be given in exact figures; and no more shall be printed under any pretext, either for the author, or the newspapers, or the thirteenths, or the *main de passe* [overplus on each ream, printer's term]. Such copies, called

gratis, give rise to abuses. It is more simple to adapt the price of the copy to the number intended for sale.

8. All copies printed over and above the agreed number shall be paid double price to the author as indemnity.

9. Each copy must bear the price, either on its title-page or on the printer's mark.

10. The publisher has not the right to increase this price.

11. The publication of a literary work in a serial, in a periodical, or in a newspaper does not give the editor of such publications the ownership of it, unless he has a registered contract by which the author has given him the work absolutely. That case excepted, the members of the Society will recover their rights in their work two months after the publication of the last section of it; unless stipulation shall have been made to re-enter their rights more quickly.

12. All contracts by which a member of the Society engages to work for more than three consecutive years for one publisher are null and void. In case a member is shown to have made such contract without the knowledge of the agent of the Society, the Society will sue in the Courts for the annulling of the contract. Exceptions: (1) Contracts shown to the agent and relating to collective works of twelve volumes in two columns, and over. (2) Contracts relating to newspapers.

13. Every member of the staff of a newspaper who for ten consecutive years has published in a newspaper more than forty articles a year ought to obtain a pension of not less than twelve hundred francs a year. In case of refusal by owners, the Society will take measures to constrain them.

15. This pension shall only be demanded in case the staff writer shall not have twelve hundred francs a year of his own.

*Section II. Payments, Engagements for periods,  
Failures and Refusals to deliver work.*

16. No publisher shall have the right to refuse sale, or to hinder it, to the detriment of the author.

17. The sale of a manuscript to be written by agreement by a man of letters to a publisher is not a commercial but an eventual operation, and the publisher, by that fact, is subjected to all the chances offered by the author's faculties and the disturbance of those faculties. If the publisher has made pecuniary advances to the author, and the author cannot do the promised work, the publisher has a right to no more than the restitution of the sums advanced with interest from the day of payment. If the author does not reimburse the publisher the latter will have privileged rights on the literary property of the author.

18. All sales of absolute ownership having been, as required by the terms of Article 1, communicated to the agency of the Society, the preferred rights granted by an author or obtained against an author will result from a deed consented to by him, registered and deposited at the agency, where a register *ad hoc* will be kept. Each right will be enforced in its order, and wholly; so that each sum will be integrally paid before passing to the next. Preferred [or privileged] sums do not bear interest.

19. The payment of a literary work made in notes of hand does not oblige an author to deliver his work until those notes are duly paid. The protest of a single note suspends the contract; non-payment thereof annuls the contract.

20. (Relates to privileges in case of failure of publisher.)

21. A publisher cannot sell a book in block without giving guarantee to the author in case the price has not

been paid to him. If no guarantee is given the purchaser of the edition becomes liable to the author.

22. Every author who, without plausible pretext, shall not deliver to a publisher a completed manuscript, or shall delay his permission to print [*bons à tirer*] beyond all reason, is liable to interest-damages.

23. Every publisher who publishes a book without the author's permission to print is liable to interest-damages.

24. Unless the contrary be stipulated, all corrections and costs of whatever kind in the making or sale of a book belong to the publisher.

25. (Relates to sale of one book to two publishers.)

26. Any member of the Society who shall sell to a publisher as his work a book, a collection, or any work of a dead author shall be condemned to restitution of the sum paid with interest-damages. The publisher will have no redress if the literary fraud were committed with his knowledge.

30. The right to put engravings, vignettes, illustrations to a literary work belongs to the author, unless there be stipulations to the contrary. No one has the right to make a portrait of the author without his consent.

31. The right of publishing a literary work has two phases: 1st. That of the first edition; to which apply all the foregoing rules, which preclude, of course, all right to sell the work to others for publication in other ways (unless so stipulated). 2nd. That of succeeding editions, when the author may sell the same work to different publishers, for different forms of publication, or even for the same. If, five years after the first publication of his book, the author cedes the right of a new edition, he still has the right to publish it in other ways than in the ceded edition.

33. In no case, even when the publisher takes the place of the author absolutely, has he any right to cut the

work in parts, alter it, or suppress anything. The work must remain what the author made it; he has the right also to perfect it. In case a publisher falsifies, alters, or mutilates a book, however absolute be his purchase of it, he shall pay interest-damages. In case an author, under pretext of perfecting his work, shall alter it intentionally, the publisher must bring the matter to the jurisdiction of the Society.

### *Section III. Collaboration.*

35. No one is compelled to remain in partnership.

37. Ownership in a work belonging to two or more authors will be sold at auction among them before the committee; so that the ownership will go to the highest bidder; the report of the proceedings will stand in place of contract.

38. In all cases where collaborators have differences the matter shall be submitted to the committee.

40. There is no prior right for the idea of a work, unless for an author who has sold his claim to it by a registered deed, by the declaration of the printer to the government under prescribed rules, or by written proof accompanied by testimonial proof. Any one using an idea protected in those cases is liable to interest-damages.

42. Whoever sells the work of a collaborator without his knowledge may be, on the complaint of said collaborator, excluded from the Society.

43. When an idea has been started by two authors and they cannot agree upon the execution, they may each treat it in his own way; but only after making a declaration to the committee. Failing which, the first to publish may summon the second before the committee.

*Section IV. Plagiarism not foreseen by the Civil Code.*

44. The act of turning the subject of a book, or literary work of any kind, into a play, and, reciprocally, making a play into a book without the express consent in writing of the author is plagiarism.

45. In such cases the original writer has a right to one-third of the profits.

46. This plagiarism can take place only between living authors; the heirs of an author are not entitled to complain. A foreign author is not entitled to lodge a complaint, unless the legislation of his own country gives a French author a right to reparation in that country.

47. Whoever is convicted of plagiarism three times is excluded from the Society.

50. The title of a book or play is property; so is a pseudonym. The plagiarism of a title or a pseudonym gives a right to interest-damages; but only if the complainant has conformed to the stipulations of Article 40.

54. When an action for plagiarism is brought against a man of letters who is not a member of the Society, he has the right to require the addition of a number of arbitrators chosen by himself, equal in number to the members of the committee who may be sitting on the case. In case of a tie, the president will give the casting vote.

*Section V. Translation.*

55. Every foreign author shall have on the translation into French of his work the same rights that the legislation of his own country gives to a French author in that country.

56. All translation made in France into a foreign language of a work by a member of this Society will be proceeded against by the committee as piracy.



*Section VI. Attacks between men of letters.*

57. To attribute to an author acts, writings, or words which are not his, and to which he is a stranger, constitutes literary defamation.

Whosoever, with the object of ridiculing an author, attributes to him words, acts, or writings that are false may be reprimanded or condemned to pay interest-damages to that author.

A repetition of the offence carries with it a condemnation to interest damages.

In case of a third repetition the member of the Society will be excluded and sued, at the costs of the Society, in the Courts.

58. The writer of all criticisms has the right to criticise only works; he cannot, either by insinuation or allusion, enter the domain of private life, or concern himself with the material interests of a man of letters.

In case a writer of criticisms, feuilletons, or a journalist should attack the honour or the reputation of a member of the Society he will be proceeded against as in the preceding article.

59. It is forbidden to write, unless by consent, the biography of a living author. All acts of that nature will be, on complaint of the member attacked, proceeded against in the Courts, if the author does not accept the jurisdiction of the committee, he not being a member of the Society.

61. The name of an author is property.

To take the name of an author and call him a collaborator in any periodical, collective work, or newspaper, without his written consent, constitutes a misdemeanour which shall be judged by the committee when committed by a member of the Society, or sued before the Courts by the committee when committed by an editor or other speculator.

62. To attribute to an author an article, or any printed work, from which damage or loss of respect may result to him is an act for which a man of letters shall be excluded from this Society.

63. Good faith shall never be admitted as an excuse when the matter concerns the publication of a false fact to the injury of the reputation, honour, or morality of a man of letters.

VI.

LITERATURE. THE PRESS.

*The Monograph of the Parisian Press.*

[THE MONOGRAPH OF THE PARISIAN PRESS.]

MME. SURVILLE, Balzac's sister Laure, gives, in her memoir of him, the following account of when and why this Monograph was written.

“ His lawsuit with the *Revue de Paris* in relation to the ‘Lys dans la Vallée,’ together with the book entitled ‘*Illusions Perdues*,’ in which he had drawn a picture of the feuilletonists, exasperated the press against him; and so bitter are literary hatreds that even his death has not yet disarmed them all. He troubled himself very little about such attacks, and he often brought us the papers or periodicals in which the worst appeared and read us the articles.

“ ‘Just see what a state of mind those fellows are in,’ he would say. ‘Fire away, my dear enemies, the armour is proof: it saves advertising; your praises would leave the public indifferent, but your insults will wake it up. . . . Don’t they howl! If I were rich, people might say I paid them. However, we mustn’t say a word; if they get the idea they are doing me good they are capable of holding their tongues.’

“ We thought otherwise and the attacks troubled us.

“ ‘How silly you are to take them to heart,’ he would say. ‘Can critics make my work good or bad? Let time,

the great umpire, show ; if these fellows are wrong the public will see it some day or other ; injustice then becomes a benefit to those it has injured. Besides, these guerillas of art hit true sometimes ; and by correcting the faults they point out, the work is improved, — in fact, I really owe them some gratitude.’

“Consequently, he would make neither remonstrances nor explanations. Once only he broke the rule of silence he had laid down for himself by writing the ‘*Monographie de la Presse Parisienne*.’ This work, sparkling with wit in every line, was wrung from him by his friends ; they accused him of weakness, almost of cowardice ; he showed his claws to oblige them ; but he afterwards regretted the work, which wronged, he thought, his character if not his talent.”

#### MONOGRAPH OF THE PARISIAN PRESS.

(*Extract from the Natural History of the Bimane in Society.*)

##### Notice to pirates.

The Order Gendeleltre having constituted itself into a society to defend its rights and property, there necessarily results, as is common in France with many institutions, an antithesis between the aim and the result ; literary property is more pillaged than ever. And as Brussels is now as much in France as it is in Belgium, we are forced, we publishers, being still under the empire of common law, to declare distinctly : —

That the Monograph of the Parisian Press belongs to us.

That the deposit thereof has been made according to law.

That all publications of this work will be prosecuted, inasmuch as its reproduction has been forbidden, and, if need be, in the name of the author.

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We have heard Victor Hugo expressing and paraphrasing, with the eloquence natural to him, a fine thought which we venture to render as follows : —

France has two aspects. Eminently military in times of war, she is equally powerful in times of peace through

her ideas. The pen and the sword, these are her favourite weapons. France is inventive because she has intellect; she is artistic because art is the complement of letters; she is commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, because a nation should produce its production as a silk-worm its cocoon; but in each of these three fields she has rivals who at the present moment are still her superiors; whereas her armies have fought the world for fifteen years and have given it a moral government.

The English have a charming and proverbial expression to characterize the necessity one is under to speak up for one's self: "That man's trumpeter is dead," they say.

Victor Hugo spoke for France. Is it not a calamity that the indifference of the present government in regard to letters should have forced our great poet to say what ought not even to be thought by Europe? If the French pen possesses such power surely it is advisable to give an analytical description of the Order Gendeleltre.

Of this order, we place first two species, namely: the species *PUBLICIST* and the species *CRITIC*; which compose, with their sub-species and varieties, the *Parisian Press*, that terrible power the fall of which is constantly prevented by the blunders of the government.

MAXIM: *You can kill the press as you kill a people, by giving it liberty.*

It is, especially, to this section of our Treatise on the Bimane in Society that we have given the sort of attention to which zoölogy owes its monographs on annelids, mollusks, entozoas, etc.; an attention which ought not to be lacking to these curious moral species. We hope that foreign nations will take some pleasure in reading this portion of Natural Social History, to which vigorous illustrations will give the value of an iconography.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS. The principal characteristic of these species is to have none. The individuals

belonging to the sub-species of *ministerial publicist* (see later), who might be supposed to retain some characteristics at least, have not the slightest appearance of any. If they had, they would be essentially at variance with the conditions of French politics, which evade all definitions and commend themselves to philosophy by continual nonsense. We may remark, however, a few individuals who by dint of always writing the same thing (for want of being able to find another) do pass for having characteristics; but these are evidently hobbyists, whose mania, wholly without danger, stuns the believing subscribers, and rejoices the free-thinking ones.

In physical respects the individuals of these species lack beauty; nearly all are devoid of that politeness which the writers of the eighteenth century owed to their intercourse with salons, where they were courted. These men now live isolated; separated by their own pretensions, and knowing little of each other, so afraid are they of making undesirable acquaintances. This solitary life does not, however, hinder each and all from exercising their envy on the positions, talent, fortunes, or personal advantages of their brethren in the fraternity; so that their ferocious mania for equality comes precisely from the fact that they recognize among themselves the most wounding inequalities.

#### FIRST SPECIES — THE PUBLICIST.

*Eight sub-species:* A, the Journalist; B, the Statesman; C, the Pamphleteer; D, the Nothingarian; E, the Publicist in public office; F, the Monobible writer; G, the Translator; H, the Author with convictions.

Publicist, that name once given to great writers such as Grotius, Puffendorf, Bodin, Montesquieu, Blackstone, Bentham, Mably, Savary, Adam Smith, Rousseau, has become that of all the scribblers who *do* politics. From



the splendid generalizer, prophet, pastor of ideas that he once was, the publicist is now a man who busies himself with the floating straws of current life. If a pimple appears on the body politic the publicist scratches it, spreads it, makes it bleed, and gets a book out of it, which is often a hoax. Publicism was once a great concentric mirror: the publicists of to-day have broken it to pieces and each has a bit which he twirls and makes glitter before the eyes of the crowd. These different bits, here they are:—

#### A. THE JOURNALIST.

*Five varieties:* 1. The director-editor-in-chief-proprietor-responsible-manager. 2. The tenor. 3. The writer of solid articles. 4. The Maître-Jacques. 5. The reporter of the Chambers.

*First variety.* The director-editor-in-chief-proprietor-responsible-manager. This fine species is the Marquis de Tuffière of journalism. Publicist because he never writes, as others are publicists because they write too much, this individual, who always presents one of the four faces of his quadruple title, derives in part from the property-owner, the grocer, the speculator, and being suitable for neither, is fitted for all. The staff-editors transform this ambitious being into a mighty man who wishes to be, and does become, according to circumstances, prefect, councillor of State, receiver-general, director of theatres, when he has not the good sense to stay such as he is: the porter of glory, the trumpeter of speculation, the Bouneau of the electorate. He admits an article if he pleases; or lets it lie on a shelf in the printing-room. He can push a book, an affair, a man, and sometimes ruin all three, according to circumstances. This Bertrand of all the Rats of the newspapers gives himself out as the soul of his sheet, and consequently each succeeding Cabinet negotiates with

him. Hence his importance. By dint of talking with his sub-editors he rubs in a few ideas, gets an air of having great views, and squares himself pompously like a personage. In this way he is a strong man, or a clever man, who is in the hands of a danseuse, an actress, or a singer, sometimes of a legitimate wife—the real occult power of the journal.

MAXIM: *All newspapers have a crinoline petticoat for rudder, precisely the same as the old monarchies.*

There was once (he is dead) a single director of a newspaper in the true acceptance of the word. That man was learned, he had a strong mind, he had intellect; he never wrote anything. The staff of sub-editors came to him every morning and listened to the substance of articles they were to write. This personage was without ambition; he made peers, ministers, academicians, professors, ambassadors, and a dynasty, without ever seeking anything for himself; he refused the visit of a king; he refused everything, even the cross of the Legion of honour. An old man, he was still ardent; a journalist, he was not always, *in petto*, of the opinion of his newspaper. All the papers of the present day put together, proprietors, directors, editors, are not the small change of that man's brain.

Education and information apart, it is not enough to have a hundred thousand francs and security to become director-editor-in-chief-proprietor-manager of a newspaper; other things are needed: a violent will and a theatrical capacity, which are often lacking to men of real talent. Thus it is that we see many men in Paris who have outlived their power. The newspaper has its luckless Fernando Cortez just as the Bourse has its ex-millionaire. Want of success in proportion to effort explains the frightful number of gloomy journalistic faces which Parisians exhibit to an observer who studies them as they walk the boulevards. Since 1830 no less than fifty newspapers

have been killed by political ambition ; which involves an irrecoverable loss of ten millions of francs. We have seen, and we still see, papers started in Paris for the purpose of ruining older papers by making an inferior sheet on all the special points of the paper they seek to overthrow. The ex-director-in-chief-editor-proprietor-manager is no longer a man, a thing, he becomes the despised shadow of a fœtus of ambition.

There are three kinds of directors-in-chief, etc., namely: the ambitious kind, the business kind, and the pure-blooded kind.

The ambitious kind starts a newspaper to uphold a political system in the triumph of which he is interested, expecting to become a personage in public affairs by making himself feared. The business kind uses his paper as an investment of capital, the interest of which is paid him in influence, pleasures, and sometimes money. The pure-blooded kind is a man in whom editorship is a vocation, who understands his dominion, who takes pleasure in bringing out intellects, without at the same time losing sight of the profits of his paper. The first two make their sheet a means; whereas to the latter his paper is his vocation, his house, his pleasure, his dominion; the others become personages: he lives and dies a journalist pure-blooded.

The proprietor-editor-in-chief-managers are all routinememen and stingy. Like the government they attack, they are afraid of innovations; they often perish for not knowing how to make necessary outlays in harmony with the progress of new lights.

MAXIM: *Every newspaper which does not increase the number of its subscribers is on the down-track.*

A newspaper, to live long, must be a reunion of men of talent; it must become a school. Ill-luck to those which depend on a single talent. As a general thing, the director of the present day is jealous of the men of talent

who are necessary to him. He is apt to surround himself with second-rate men, who flatter him and do his work cheaply. When his paper dies it is always "the best edited journal in Paris."

*Second variety.* The Tenor. We call *premier-Paris* the pompous article [*tartine*] which is found daily at the head of the public prints, without which nourishment it would seem that the intellect of the subscribers must starve. The writer of the leading article is therefore the tenor of the paper; he is, or thinks he is, the *ut de poitrine* which catches subscribers as the tenor fills the theatre. With that purpose in view, it is difficult for a man not to sing false and become mediocre. This is why:

Barring degrees, there are but two forms for the leading article: the opposition form, the ministerial form. There is, to be sure, a third form, but we shall see presently how and why it is seldom used. Whatever the government may do, the writer of the leading articles of the opposition must find something to complain of, to blame, scold, or give advice about. Whatever the government may do the writer of the ministerial articles is expected to defend. One is a constant negation, the other a constant affirmation — putting aside the colour that tints the prose of each party, for there are third elements in each party. At the end of a certain number of years the writers on both sides come to have calluses, indurations of the mind; they have made themselves a sort of manner of seeing, and they actually live on a limited number of phrases. If the writer fastened to this machine is a superior man, he gets out of it; if he remains in it he becomes mediocre.

All leading articles have a conventional phraseology, like that of the deputies, who make conventional speeches in the Chamber. None of them dares to speak of things as they are. Neither the oppositionists nor the ministerials are writing history. The press is not as free as

the public in France and foreign countries imagine from that saying: *liberty of the press*. There are facts it is unable to tell, and necessary modifications of the facts they do speak of. The jesuitism which Pascal stigmatized was much less hypocritical than that of the press. To its shame, the press is free only towards the weak, or towards isolated persons.

The tenor of the press is incognito; he never signs; he is in reality the *condottiere* of the middle ages. We all saw M. Thiers enrolling and directing the fire of five tenors at the time of the coalition. Consequently the *premier-Paris* has an assuming air; it thinks that it speaks to Europe, and believes that Europe pays attention to it. When its author dies no one knows the name of the illustrious writer whom the newspaper mourns.

Genius, or if you will only allow of talent, talent consists in seeing in politics all the aspects of a fact, the bearing of each event; it consists in foreseeing the event in its cause, and deducing from it that which is profitable to national policy; but a writer who would cast his leading article into this third form would drive away the subscribers to the paper. The more the paper became a Pitt or a Montesquieu, the less success it would have (see the NOTHINGARIAN). It would be understood only by those to whom events suffice and who do not need the opinion of a newspaper. The paper, therefore, which has the most subscribers is that which most resembles the masses: draw your conclusions for that!

*Third Variety.* The Writer of solid articles. This writer is concerned with special topics, and differs in phraseology from the tenor. He may have an opinion in all that does not touch on politics. In studying commercial and agricultural questions and books of the higher sciences, this publicist has rectitude in his ideas. Consequently, he is of much greater real value than the tenor. He seldom comes to the newspaper office, and he writes

only three or four articles a month. The *premier-Paris*, always based upon passing events, is baked at the opera, in the lobbies of the Chamber, at dinner with the political patron of the paper (see later), whereas the solid article requires a knowledge of the book or of the science of which it treats; it thus happens that this staff-writer earns little money and may be compared to those who do what are called the "utility" rôles at a theatre.

In the ministerial journals these writers have a future; they become consuls-general in distant latitudes; they are taken as private secretaries by the ministers; or they are given an educational position. Those of the opposition, on the other hand, or those of the anti-dynastic papers, have only academies of sciences moral and political and of belles-lettres to look to as an asylum, or else the excessively problematic triumph of their party. The solid article is disappearing from the papers, which are beginning to be full of emptiness. No sheet is rich enough to pay for conscientious talent and serious studies. (See later the species *Critic*.)

*Fourth variety.* The Maître-Jacques of the newspaper.

Besides the leading article, that *pot-au-feu* of the newspaper, besides the solid article, now becoming rare, the sheet is made up of a crowd of short articles entitled *Entre-filets*, *Faits-Paris*, and *Réclames* [brief articles separated by lines, Parisian items, short notices of a book, or an object of commerce, etc.]. These three kinds of article are prepared and arranged by a gendelle, under the control of the manager or proprietor, at a fixed stipend of about five hundred francs a month. His business is to read all the Parisian papers and those of the departments, and to snip out with scissors the little facts, items, and news which each number contains; the *réclames* [notices, announcements] he admits or rejects as the manager bids him. Required to superintend the "putting into pages," the elements of the number,



Maître-Jacques, on his feet until the paper actually goes to press, is a very important person. The most interesting things, the great and the little articles, are all a question of "putting into pages" between midnight and one in the morning, fateful hour for newspapers! — the hour when the last political news, learned in the evening, must be got in between two lines [*entre-files*].

The *entre-filet* of the Opposition is usually a contradiction to give to another paper, or to a piece of news announced by some journal for the morrow, or it falls on "favouritism" in appointments with the effect of a cudgel, for the motto of all the opposition journals is this:

MAXIM: *Strike first, explain afterwards.*

The *faits-Paris* are the same in all papers. Take out the *premiers-Paris* [leading articles] and there would be but one and the same newspaper. Hence the daily necessity of something contradictory, something of one kind or another to attain to the absurd. It was the *faits-Paris* that produced the *canard*.

Let us here fix the etymology of that word, which originated with the press: "We call a *canard*," says a member of it, "a fact which has all the appearance of being true, but which we invent to tone up the *faits-Paris* when they are pale."

The pure-blooded *canard* has reached at times prodigious heights and has absorbed the attention of all Europe. Napoleon pensioned a man who for five years published in the *Moniteur* false despatches of a war of the Afghans against the British. When the fraud was discovered, it had been so plainly in the interests of Napoleon that he forgave the audacious deception.

*Fifth variety.* The reporter of the Chambers.

Every newspaper *does* the Chambers by a stenographic reporter, who is present at the sessions and reports them in the colour of his own paper. Hence it comes that the real session is not reported anywhere, not even in the

*Moniteur*, which is not allowed to have opinions, and cannot describe the physiognomy of the Chamber. Read the reports of the sessions in the different journals and you seem to hear the score of every instrument separately; in vain do you read all the papers, they will not give you an idea of the whole: the leader of the orchestra, the passion, the *mêlée* of the conflict, the attitudes, all are wanting, and imagination cannot supply them. A paper which dared to be truthful on this point would have an immense success.

The reporters of all papers know each other; in fact they are forced to do so, for they are squeezed into one box in the Chamber and are, in spite of their being young, perhaps because they are young, the judges of that daily tournament. The *National* says to the *Gazette*: "There's your deputy putting his foot into it." Piles of notes are sent from the reporters' box to the orators, to whom these youngsters impart facts and quotations. It is known that struggles and certain whole sessions have been directed wholly from the reporters' box. You hear exclamations such as: "There now! I had stuffed him so carefully" (this may relate to a minister), "and just see what he does with it, hang him!"

#### B. THE STATESMAN.

*Four varieties*: 1. The politician. 2. The attaché. 3. The detached attaché. 4. The politician à brochure.

*First variety.* The politician.

Every newspaper has, besides its own staff, a man who gives it its colour; to whom it attaches itself, who protects it ostensibly or secretly; who may have belonged to some of the following sub-species and has contrived to get it said of him: "He is a politician." This is a man who has entered, or who will enter public life; or who has left it and intends to return to it. He is sometimes a myth; he may be said not to exist; he has not two

ideas ; make him an under-secretary and he would prove incapable of managing the street-sweeping department.

MAXIM : *The more of a nonentity a politician is, the better he will be for Grand Lama of a newspaper.*

The newspaper is the newspaper and the politician is its prophet. Now you know that prophets are much more prophets for what they don't say than for what they do say. There is nothing so infallible as a mute prophet.

The politician remains in his sanctuary ; he is never seen in the newspaper offices. Editors, proprietors, managers, they all go to him. He is usually to be found in the Chamber. The number of subscribers he controls is well-known ; the respect shown to him derives from that. Sometimes he appears in a *premier-Paris*, or is manifested in an *entre-filet*. But he does much work for the paper, nevertheless. He goes into the country to his constituents ; he attends banquets where he fulminates a spitche [speech], an English word which is now becoming French, for it signifies something that is neither French nor English, which is said, not thought, which is neither discourse, conversation, opinion, nor allocution, but a necessary stupidity, a phrase of constitutional music sung to any air 'twixt pear and cheese, as they say, in the bosom of his fellow-citizens — though perhaps there are only four or five present, politician included.

*Second variety.* The attaché.

In certain papers with convictions you will find disinterested men, who live (meaning mentally) by a system to which they have devoted their lives ; men with green, yellow, blue, or red spectacles, who die attached to the paper with their spectacles still on their noses. People say of them : "He is attached to such or such a paper." These men are seldom of no importance in it ; sometimes they are advisers, more frequently its men of action. They are always known for "the strength of their principles." In the opposition or radical journals they invent

*coups de Jarnac* [sly blows] to trip up ministers; they are the mainspring of coalitions; they bring to light arbitrary acts; they go into the provinces at contested elections; they trouble the sleep of ministers by perpetually nagging them. To them are owing "palpitating questions" — electoral reform, the vote of the National guard, petitions to the Chamber, and so forth. These worthy men of heart are the sharp-shooters of the press until, tired of dancing attendance in one position, they begin to perceive they are dupes of an idea, or of men, or of things, and that there is nothing so thankless as an idea, a thing, or a party — for a party is an idea supported by things.

*Third variety.* The detached attaché.

This other attaché does not, to use a military expression, stultify himself among the rank and file. He winds his way among newspapers and independent articles. He serves ministers; he betrays them; he thinks himself shrewd. He often drapes himself with puritanism; he has some talent, and frequently belongs to the University. He is a political and literary reporter both. He does his work for prices that are always disputed; he dines at all tables; agrees to attack such and such a man for such and such a paper, or praise another, or make a false attack in one paper in order to victoriously reply elsewhere. In this way, these detached attachés, who go and come in the newspapers like dogs hunting round for their masters, end by becoming the professors of fantastic science, the private secretaries of ministers, or consuls-general; they obtain missions, and when they get a position they make room for others who follow in their footsteps. But they must render innumerable services, and make themselves dreaded to reach this end. These marauders of the press are often abandoned by those they serve, but they *always expected it*. "This" they say "is what a man comes to if he has heart."

MAXIM: *His heart is the compensation of the impolitic man.*

*Fourth variety.* The politician à *brochure*.

Some writers manifest themselves only by *brochures*; but every event supplies them with one, as M. Jovial makes a song thereupon. They are no longer read, but in former times these writers actually made political characters. M. de Salvandy was the incestuous product of several contrary opinions published in *brochures* during the Restoration — which was a period of fine weather for this kind of political blossoming, for in those days newspapers were not allowed to say everything. Usually the *brochure* politician adopts a specialty. Every time his specialty crops up, he pulls out the cork of his *brochure*. In this way, he comes to be a special man; he often makes articles in the newspapers on his own *brochure*; he conquers a position; he is frequently rich. The philanthropist is essentially a brochurist. A man of some wit said lately: —

“*Brochures* are like grasshoppers; they swarm at seasons and in troops.”

And he went on to consider the *brochure* as a cutaneous eruption peculiar to the body politic. Philanthropists have ended by creating offices by dint of *brochure* blows on prisons, galleys, penitentiaries, etc. We are soon to have a court of *prud'hommes*.

### C. THE PAMPHLETEER.

*No variety.*

Whoso says pamphlet says opposition. No pamphlets have ever yet been written in France in favour of power. The pamphlet has at present only two faces — radical or monarchical. The true pamphlet is a work of the highest talent, if indeed it is not the cry of genius. “*L'Homme aux quarante écus*,” one of Voltaire's masterpieces, and “*Candide*” are pamphlets. The pamphleteer is a rare man; he must, however, be moved by circumstances; he is then more powerful than a newspaper. A pamphlet

means real knowledge put in attractive form, by an impeccable pen; its phraseology is terse, incisive, warm, and full of imagery — four faculties derived only from genius.

Under the Restoration the pamphlet gave us Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, Courier, and M. Vatout. M. de Chateaubriand may now, perhaps, regret his pamphlet against Napoleon. Benjamin Constant was too mechanical. Vatout is now forgotten. Courier alone remains, more, however, as a literary monument. The true pamphleteer was Béranger; the others aided, more or less, in the sapping of the liberals; but he alone struck blows, for he preached to the masses.

To-day we have two pamphleteers: l'Abbé de Lamennais and M. de Cormenin. The intentions of the latter are not clearly defined; he is not on good ground; he attacks the budget, though he knows better than any one that the budget is the blood of the body politic and that the State returns it tenfold through its veins. It would be abler manœuvring to discuss the employment of funds. Besides, his style is heavy. . . . Sieyès remains the prince of pamphleteers; he showed the true way of using this political probe; for Courier was only an agreeable scoffer.

M. de Lamennais builds his pamphlets on a broad foundation by making them a defence of proletaries; but he has not known how to address these modern barbarians, whom another Spartacus, half Marat, half Calvin, could lead to an assault on the ignoble bourgeoisie into whose hands the government has now fallen. Luckily for those rapacious beings and for the rich, this abortive Luther has a biblical and prophetic style, the magnificent images of which are thousands of feet above the heads of the toiling poor. This great writer forgets that a pamphlet is satire in the form of a cannon-ball. The present state of things in France would not hold out against three real pamphlets. The powers that be, having gone to sleep in



fancied security, will never perceive its crime towards intellect unless by the flame of a conflagration lighted by some little book.

#### D. THE RIENOLOGUE [Nothingarian].

Called by some the commonplacer, *alias homo papaver* (necessarily without variety).

France has the deepest respect for all that is wearisome. Consequently the commonplacer attains a position quickly. People call him at once "a grave man" by reason of the boredom he exhales. The school is numerous. Its members water an idea in a bucket of banality and issue their frightful philosophico-literary jumble in series of articles, which look to be full and to contain ideas, but if a well-informed man puts his nose into them, he smells the odour of empty cellars — deep, but nothing in them; intelligence is extinguished like a candle in a cave without air. The *rienologue* is the god of our present bourgeoisie; he is at its own level, he is clean, he is spruce, he is safe; his faucet of warm water gurgles, and would gurgle in *sæcula sæculorum*, without stopping.

Who would believe that *rienologues* have, since Mme. de Staël, rediscovered Germany and rewritten her book in a multitude of their own! A commonplacer is necessary to Reviews, of course; but are not seven or eight too many? The Reviews are so precisely at the level of the "exact middle," it suits them so well to have the French intellect in that Austrian region, that they shed their favours on the Nothingarians. Those of the *Journal des Débats*, the darlings of power, eat at many mangers.

MAXIM: *The fewer ideas you have, the higher you rise.*

That is the law by which the philosophico-literary balloons reach to some point or other of the political horizon.

But after all, the government, the ministry, and the Court are right: you can only protect that which is beneath you. M. Guizot, overwhelmed by the exactions of indigenous commonplacers, imported one from foreign parts. That grand strategic manœuvre gives an odd idea of this statesman, who, knowing well how pertinacious professors are, chose, with masterly hand, a foreign one, believing that an exotic commonplacer would intimidate the others. The lesson took effect. The *rienologues* have become — modest! and no longer have hopes.

#### E. THE PUBLICIST IN PUBLIC OFFICE.

##### *No variety.*

The individuals of this species are publicists through their public speeches, their conversations in salons, their lectures at the Sorbonne or the Collège de France, through a history they have written of some kind, through their political views (they are supposed to have *views*); and though to them is owing no idea, no enterprise, no plan — other than that of seeking to be ministers — they pass for being statesmen and especially publicists. This melancholy variety, mixture of politician and *rienologue*, is essentially transitory. . . .

#### F. THE MONOBIBLE WRITER.

##### *No variety.*

Four or five men of intellect have thoroughly understood the sort of century which our bourgeois government is going to give us. Instead of relying upon the nobility or upon religion, they take intelligence for their divinity; divining that in name — though not in fact — intelligence was to be the grand word of the bourgeoisie. As we never run after anything but that which runs away from us, and as intelligence flees the bourgeoisie, the latter are very eager for it. When a man writes a tiresome book, other men excuse themselves from reading it, and say they

have read it. Now, such a writer is exactly the man of intellect that the bourgeoisie want: they want everything *cheap*; government, king, intelligence, pleasure. To write a book that is moral, governmental, philosophical, philanthropical, from which extracts can be made about everything and nothing, is an excellent lever at the present moment. After that, the writer's name is never pronounced without this long addition: "M. Marphurius, who wrote 'Germany and the Germans.'" It becomes a title, a fief; and what a fief! It produces a flock of decorations sent by all Courts, and it gives a sort of mortgage on the Institute. These young men, very clever fellows, and much above their epoch, put their three hundred octavo pages into their family records as formerly they would have entered the three hundred lances of a company.

Let us admire these able jugglers, the only ones who, having read their own book, know what to think about that *golden tooth* with which they occupied the world without the world being occupied by it. I place them here because they belong to the family of political publicists. They reach a parliamentary position by cleverly putting themselves at the tail of all questions: sugars, railways, canals, agricultural debates, blacks versus whites, industry considered as etc., etc., or, Europe in its tendencies.

#### G. THE TRANSLATOR.

(*Sub-species lost.*)

Formerly the newspapers had each a reporter of foreign news who translated and *premier-Parised* it. That lasted till 1830. Since then they have had neither translator, agent, nor correspondent: they all send to M. Havas, Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who gives them the same foreign news, bestowing the first fruits upon the paper which pays him the highest subscription. The *Journal des Débats* pays five hundred francs a month. The editors add the

sauce that suits their subscribers, so that the bombardment of Barcelona is a mere trifle in the *Constitutionnel*, and one of the greatest atrocities of modern times in the *Presse* or the *National*.

#### H. THE AUTHOR WITH CONVICTIONS.

*Three Varieties*: 1. The prophet. 2. The unbeliever. 3. The disciple.

*First variety.* The prophet.

That which makes Paris so amusing is that you see everything as if in a great magic lantern. Now in the press there exist Mohammeds. Every Mohammed needs a new god, of course; but as it is difficult to obtain living gods they deify certain dead ones. At first they took Saint-Simon, the one who produced Saint-Simonism. That doctrine manifested itself gratis in a newspaper; a great idea, which was killed by ridicule. The men grouped around it in the *Globe* were so remarkable that most of them entered careers in which they have admirably made their way. In spite of the fall of Saint-Simonism, you will still find the species *prophet* in Paris; he offers to the philosopher an opportunity to examine a malady of the mind to which great political results were owing in former days, but which has no longer any action on an epoch where all things are discussed and demigods may be and are sent before the Court of Assizes.

Still, when some newspaper receives into its poultry-yard of facts, probably from the provinces, an amazingly wild *canard* — the death of a man by famine, for instance — the prophet arises, and erects his own hair on his own head in a vigorous article which ends thus: —

“And this fact actually occurred, although we have affirmed that by the practice of Our Master’s system there would be a minimum of production on which every native-born Frenchmen could live, and live well.”

If there is talk of getting rid of the Isthmus of Panama, the prophet avers that according to the teachings of his Master the thing could be done by the phalansterians of Europe in a day. If a man is assassinated, the newspaper of the prophet proves the impossibility of crime under the political system of the Master, inasmuch as everybody's passions would then be satisfied. The doctrine is founded on Virgil's line : *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*. The murderer is a butcher and kills fowls ; a miser is a cashier ; children lick the plates and keep the platters clean, etc.

If the newspapers promulgating these various doctrines had not been published no one would ever have known all that France is capable of displaying in talent, in wit, in sound and wise criticism on vicious lines ; for we must acknowledge among these new lights a great energy, ingenious and often just perceptions in their observations on public ills ; but all that is apt to be lessened by a dry and wearisome phraseology.

*Second variety.* The unbeliever.

Beside the prophet, that noble dupe of generous illusions, will always be found the unbeliever, an extremely useful personage ; he is the business man of the idea, and gets his profit from it.

MAXIM : *The prophet sees angels, but the unbeliever makes the public see them.*

*Third variety.* The disciple.

The disciple is a man who remains very young. He believes, he has enthusiasm. He preaches on the boulevards, at the theatres, in diligences. He aspires to the flowers that grow in the moon. His passion for the Master is such that he conceives of no obstacles. This honest disciple is one of the phenomena of our day ; he is Faith ! and that is the rarest of all phenomena in Paris. A few years, and these three original varieties will have disappeared, swept away by the current of Parisian

interests. This misplaced heroism, which proves such life and warmth, which once made Penns and Moravian Brethren, will then no longer be conceivable. The prophet, with his ardent, vibrant speech, will be a deputy, stirring up the Chamber and demanding appropriations for the navy; the unbeliever may be an official in Polynesia; while the disciple will have taken refuge in his belief and his province. In ten years from now people will laugh at the idea that hundreds of persons proclaimed the Master, just as they laugh at the notion that the moon is populated by beings who crawl on their stomachs.

#### SECOND SPECIES — THE CRITIC.

*Five sub-species:* A. The Critic of the *Vieille Roche*. B. The blond Young Critic. C. The Great Critic. D. The Feuilletonist. E. The little Journalists.

The general characteristics of the critic are essentially notable in the sense that there exists in all critics an impotent author. Unable to create, the critic is the mute of the seraglio, and among these mutes we meet here and there with a Narsès and a Bagoas. Generally the critic begins by publishing books in which he may write French, but which contain neither conceptions nor characteristics: books without interest.

Formerly education, experience, and long studies were necessary before undertaking the duties of critic. They were only attempted later. But now, as Molière says, we have changed all that. There are critics who have made themselves critics at their first start, and who, understanding the rules of the game without being able to play it, have undertaken to teach it. Criticism has changed in form; there is no longer any question of its having ideas; much more is thought of a knack of saying things in a way to injure. The criticism of the day is well rendered by Bertrand, in that terrible farce called “Robert Macaire.”



When M. Gogo, the shareholder, asks for an accounting, Bertrand rises and says: "In the first place, I call attention to the fact that M. Gogo is a *canaille*."

To-day, when all things are growing more and more material, criticism has become a species of custom-house for ideas, for works of literary enterprise. Pay your dues, and you pass! Charming towards silliness and stupidity, criticism takes its raw-hide whip, its calumniating trumpet, puts on its mask and handles the foils only when some great work is in question. This is not unnatural; it loves its like, it caresses and pets mediocrity. Critics of all kinds are anxious to be thought good fellows; they do harm, not from a desire to do it, but because the public likes to have served up to it every morning three or four authors spitted like partridges and larded with ridicule. These critics think it eminently droll and in good taste to press you by the hand and seem your friend while they stab you with the poisoned needle of their articles. If one of them writes an article in your praise in a Parisian paper he will surely stab you in some London sheet.

MAXIM: *Criticism to-day is of no use except to support the critic.*

#### A. THE CRITIC OF THE VIEILLE ROCHE.

*Two varieties:* 1. The University man. 2. The Society man.

This critic is disappearing; you will scarcely find him anywhere except in the *Journal des Savants*, in a few rare articles in the *Constitutionnel* (that Noah's ark of our departed things), and in a few collected writings, where his decent style and his politeness remind one of Mlle. Noblet's dancing beside that of the new school, the Elsslers, Taglionis, Carlotta Grisis, who pass like meteors.

This critic thinks he ought to be to ideas what the

magistracy is to the judiciary species; and he is right, good man. Full of atticism, he jests but does not wound; he never touches upon personality, but he likes to be malicious. The Academy is the summit of his ambition; he thinks he has a right to be there, having devoted his whole life to letters. He is, above all else, an honest man. He would think himself dishonoured if he consented to write an article *for* after having written an article *against*. When, out of consideration for the paper, or for powerful friends, he is forced to speak of a book he does not approve, he writes an article *on*. That is his system. He never comes out of his three forms: for, against, on. The *Journal des Débats* had, for nearly thirty years, a covey of good old critics, men of intellect, men of talent, men of heart, thoroughly well-informed, who constituted a noble school of criticism. The last of these old Romans is now dead.

The critic of the *vielle roche* presents himself under two forms. He is a university man or a society man.

*First variety.* The University man.

This critic, writing seldom, takes a book, reads it, studies it, renders account to himself of the author's meaning; he examines it under the triple aspect of idea, execution, and style. At the end of a month he begins to write his three articles, analyzing as a preliminary the work itself. He makes his criticism as Boule makes his furniture. At the end of three months, when the book is well-nigh forgotten, the good old critic brings forth his heavy and conscientious piece of work. Retired on the heights of the Latin quarter in the depths of a library, this old man has seen so much he no longer cares to turn his eyes on present things. He goes about clothed in black; he is decorated with the Legion of honour and plays dominoes. He is without ambition, is pensioned, has a housekeeper, loves youth, prophesies its success, and is usually mistaken.

*Second variety.* The Society man.

This one goes with the times, though always surprised with the way times go; you will meet him, in the passive state of a stuffed bird, wandering along the boulevards, unable to comprehend journalism, with its leading articles full of blunders, its *lapsus plumæ* too frequent not to reveal crass ignorance, and its want of all social propriety. This *surant* of the Empire owns ingenuously that he belongs to "another age;" he hugs himself agreeably on his forgotten successes and knows all the anecdotes of the days of the Empire. The worthy man, half Schlegel, half Fontanes, has collected historical records; he has fulfilled functions, for in the olden time the government knew he could not live by his pen. This old critic has one advantage over the first variety: he writes no longer; he hides his disdain for contemporaneous works under an exquisite politeness and kindly formulas; he says that he lacks intelligence; is still attentive to women; goes to the theatres; buys the best false teeth and the best horses. He is so affable, and such good company that a bourgeois takes him for an old imperial prefect; but he is too well-clothed, too gallant, too devoted to the theatre and the salons to become a caricature. He has old friends both men and women; and he admirably represents what was called in the olden time a *littérateur*.

## B. THE BLOND YOUNG CRITIC.

*Three varieties:* 1. The *Négateur*. 2. The Jester.  
3. The Censer-bearer.

Paris, which laughs at all things, even when there is nothing to laugh at, invented this descriptive name for the beardless critic who proceeds on the principle that "Gogo is *canaille*." There is no necessity for being

blond to be a blond critic; some of them are very dark indeed.

*First variety. The Négateur.*

When this critic is lodging on a fourth story with a grisette he is essentially moral and cries out upon the roofs: "What are we coming to?" If he marries, his opinions change to those of the Regency, and he justifies the greatest enormities. He, who scarcely knows his mother tongue, is a purist; he denies style in a book that is all style; he denies plot when there is a plot; he denies all that is and lauds what is not; that is his way. He examines the point on which the author is strong, and when he has fully recognized its real merits he bases his blame upon it and says: "That is not so." He makes his mistress read the books he reviews, and often adopts her analysis of them. What she tells him over night, he disgorges in the morning. He is purist, moralist, and *négateur*, and he never comes out of his programme.

*Second variety. The Jester.*

This fine variety is given to perpetual "pleasantry," such as giving an account of a book and misinterpreting its meaning and confounding the names of its personages; or making believe that a mediocre book is a work of genius. The Jester likes to "make" actors, authors, singers, danseuses, designers. He works and writes on everything; he talks of art, and knows nothing about it; he describes an industrial exhibition, a session of the Academy, a ball at Court, in none of which has he set foot. Writing the biography of a respected old man, he calls him thirty-six and deplores that he died in the flower of his age. If some one takes the liberty to remind him that Raffaele did not paint the Judith in the Pitti palace, "Pedant!" he replies, laughing.

The blond young critic has friends who sing hosannas to him and share his loose life; he dines and sups; he goes to all parties, and belongs to all parties; he keeps a

carnival that lasts from the 2nd of January to the Saint-Sylvestre; consequently the blond young critic himself does not last long. You have seen him young, elegant, supposed to have brains, having written a book — for all these literary pinks of fashion publish as soon as they leave college a book of some sort, novel, or volume of verses — and you will presently find him faded, jaded, his eyes as extinct as his intellect. He is looking for “a position” and, strange to say, he will find one; he is consul-general in some Arabian-Night country; or, bravely settled, neither more nor less than a hosier in the country, where he acquires property. But, to use a term of journalist argot, “he has nothing more in his belly” — except impotence, envy, and despair.

*Third variety.* The Censer-bearer.

In all newspapers there is a praiser, a critic appointed to praise; a fellow without gall, kindly, who turns out criticism as he might pure milk. His style is round and mellifluous, without any sort of pepper. His business is to praise, and he praises in a variety of ways as disagreeable as they are ingenious. He has récépts for all cases; he strips the rose of its leaves and spreads them out over three columns with all the grace of a perfumer's shop-boy; his articles have the innocence of acolytes whose censer is always in their hands. The result is flat, but agreeable to him whom the article concerns. Newspaper editors are glad to have on hand a writer of this kind. Unluckily, in the long run, subscribers recognize his style and cease to read his unleavened dough; and many writers, threatened with the censer-bearer, prefer to be stabbed to death than die like Clarence in a butt of Malmsey.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Monographie de la Presse Parisienne* is slightly, but not essentially, abridged in this translation.

## C. THE GREAT CRITIC.

*Two varieties.* 1. The Executioner. 2. The Euphuist.  
*First variety.* The Executioner.

This critic is expressed in one word: ennui. -He is bored himself, and he tries to bore others. His base is envy; but he gives great proportions to both his envy and his ennui. He has the advantage over other sub-species of knowing something, of studying questions, of writing the language correctly; that is to say, without heat, without imagery, but purely. His style is cold and keen like the blade of a knife. He is a grammarian; he reads the books he reviews, he is conscientious in his envy, and that is why the enemies of all talent call him "a great critic." Above all, he is haughty and disdainful; he holds to his judgments once given, and allows no appeal. He does not concern himself indifferently with all books and all things, like the blond young critic and the incense-bearer; he chooses his victims, and he considers that choice so ennobling that it allows him to apply the "question ordinary and extraordinary" of his criticism, a torture he likes to make pitiless. To the men of his period he is a literary torturer, an executioner. But he particularly likes to do justice on the dead; he scrutinizes their intentions and discovers a crowd of ideas that are not to be found in contemporaneous authors.

*Second variety.* The Euphuist.

This other great critic is hazy and downy. He does his work in phrases like those of the wits of Queen Elizabeth's court. Hence his name. We will pass him by. His prose makes that of the Executioner more acceptable. It is better to be slain by a sabre than to perish between wadded mattresses.



## D. THE FEUILLETONIST.

Behold of all blotters of paper, the luckiest. He lives on the leaves of his newspaper like a silkworm, busy, like that insect, in spinning. The feuilletonists, whatever they may say, lead a joyous life; they reign at the theatres, where they are petted and caressed; and yet they complain of the growing number of first representations which they attend, in good boxes, with their mistresses.

Strange fact! books that are serious, works of art chiselled patiently and costing nights and months of toil, cannot obtain attention in the newspaper, where a dead silence covers them, whereas the last vaudeville of the last theatre, the *flouffons* of the *Variétés*, born of a few breakfasts, manufactured like stockings or calico, receive a complete and periodical analysis. This work requires on every newspaper a special reporter, recorder of Dejazet's last indecency, historian of the kaleidoscopic repetitions of seven poses incessantly moving under an opera-glass. This reporter, the Panurge of the newspaper, complains, like sultans, that he has too much pleasure; his palate is sated with ambrosia; he faints under the weight of fifteen hundred acts yearly on which he must trot his scalpel and feed his pen. Like a cook who has to take Seidlitz powders to get back his taste, he goes to the Funambules. Why are these privileges given to such champagne froth and denied to the literary art? This topic leads up to a horrible mercantile inquiry, which unveils the immorality of legislative ideas, under the weight of which all newspapers find themselves; it is this:

The theatre pays the newspaper in pleasures; it stuffs the staff of all the species, from the editor down, with tickets, boxes, privileges; whereas the publisher pays the paper in money. If the paper analyzed books as it analyzes the stage, advertisement in the paper would be

unnecessary; and since the time when the fourth page of all newspapers became a fruitful field where advertisements flourish, the criticism of books has ceased. This is one of the causes of the progressive diminution of the sale of literary works, in whatever category they may belong. Literature and other industries have paid the tax and postage of newspapers from the day when their advertisements became worth two hundred thousand francs a year.

Geoffroy was the father of the *feuilleton*. The *feuilleton* is a creation which belongs to Paris only and can exist only in Paris. In no other country will you find this exuberance of wit, this irony on all tones, these treasures of reason wasted so madly, these existences vowed to the life of a sky-rocket, to weekly parades instantly forgotten, all of which must have the infallibility of an almanac and the gauziness of lace to deck with a flounce the journalistic robe every Monday. This vivacious production of wit makes Paris to-day the most amusing, brilliant, and curious capital that ever was. But the business of the *feuilletonist* is so difficult that there are not two in twenty who succeed. One of the two is one of our most distinguished poets.

#### E. THE LITTLE JOURNALISTS.

*Five varieties:* 1. The Bravo. 2. The Blagueur. 3. The Fisher. 4. The Anonymous. 5. The Guerilla.

Excepting the variety bravo, several of whom pose in a plumed hat and one hand on the hip in Reviews, all the varieties of this sub-species belong to the reporters of the "little journals." There are in Paris a score of Scandal publications jeering at any cost; shrill printed clamours, many of which are witty and spiteful and form the light batteries of the press. Nearly all young writers who start in life as poets (more or less) swarm in these news-

papers while dreaming of better positions ; being drawn to Paris, as gnats to the sun, with the notion that they can live *gratis* in a ray of golden joy cast from a publishing office of book or newspaper. They ferret themselves in among the publishers, they insinuate their way into Reviews, and succeed, with difficulty ; losing in the effort to “produce” themselves both time and youth. These worthy fellows think that wit dispenses with the necessity of thought ; they take envy for a muse, and when they come to measure the distance between a book and a column in a newspaper, when they venture upon the wide waste that separates style from the clever phrases of the little journal, their brains collapse, they fall exhausted, and they change into directors of *feuilletons*, into Maître Jacques, or they become clerks in some ministry ; though several of these sharp-shooters may be found in the condition of quiet men, living on their means in bourgeois fashion ; the latter have joined to their journalistic work a sort of sleeping partnership in producing vaudevilles and melodramas, or items for the Montyon prizes.

These men are, in my opinion, the most original characters in the press. Some are as melancholy as the statues round the church of the Madeleine, some as gay as prisoners for debt ; jolly fellows who think only of love and dissipation, married men who own shares in the newspaper, jovial comrades seeing pleasure only and not harm in evil, briefless lawyers who win causes without a brief, and sons of ruined families. In them is the turbulence of the dawning literary desire, the dangerous fooling of the *gamin de Paris* fouling the noblest statues and capable of putting out the eyes of any passer with a mischievous fling. In them we find all the spice of the newspaper, a wit that is constantly original, dispensed in fireworks, the shells of which — that is, the motives — are nevertheless, and almost always, hateful.

*First variety. The Bravo.*

The bravo expects to make himself a name; or at least he hopes to do so, by attacking great reputations; he is known for *collaring* books, lashing them unmercifully; he is the sworn slaughterer. This literary flayer does not discuss a work, he chops it up; he does not examine it, he crushes it. He thinks that readers will admire the force of his pen, the vigour of his argument, the grace with which he binds his victim on the rack. His articles are executions; he earns a sou a line paid to him by the manager of the Review or newspaper. But in spite of such efforts it usually happens, through the flux of works in the press, that the bravo makes not the slightest sensation. Our present epoch is so agitated, there are so many people hurrying through the streets on their own business that there is no time to pay attention to calumnies which in the eighteenth century sent Rousseau into exile for the rest of his days. That song of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau would be a pretty thing to which no one would pay attention, it would wound none but him to whom it was addressed.

Such is the sort of jurisprudence exercised by the press on French literature. That which would bring a slap on the face of any man who ventured to say what he writes in a column becomes an honour to the calumniated person when the bravo prints it, because it is the bravo only who is dishonoured. Bravos never lack cloaks, however, to cover their nakedness, or their envy: they say they have to vindicate the outraged French language, or compromised morality; they feel bound to oppose fatal tendencies, save art, etc., etc. Among the great critics (mentioned above) there are some who have let themselves be debauched by ignoble speculators to take up their shop quarrels; who have turned against their first admirations and tried to destroy them; who have let themselves echo calumnies the stain of which remains upon their conscience,

and who now groan for having written certain pages of praise or blame that were equally false and lying.

MAXIM: *There is no police-court for calumny and the defamation of ideas.*

The shameless critic who travesties a book is not amenable, except to his own conscience and to the speculator who pays him, and who, sooner or later, pays him off. You can find in the market-place of literature as many bravos as you want at three francs a column of one hundred lines, and sixteen francs a page.

The bravo is on the watch for all that is undertaken in literature, and if he is not *counted* among the agents of that enterprise he attacks it. Go to him with open purse and he sheathes his pen.

*Second variety.* The Blagueur.

There is this difference between the bravo and the blagueur: the blagueur scoffs for scoffing's sake; if he calumniates in common with public opinion, it is by accident. He will ask your pardon for a great liberty and then attack on his own account. He fires on public follies; he shakes the old ones to see if they still hang fast to the tree; they fall, and he passes to others, glorifying himself for having rid the good valley of its caterpillars. The blagueurs killed the *Constitutionnel* by killing its hydra, anarchy, a political and periodic animal which made the delight of subscribers; the blagueurs unharnessed it from the car of state and laughed at the newspaper for its melomaniac spider. They demonetize ideas, they disparage men of worth by ridicule, they hinder private affairs, they thrust their arms into holes made in certain reputations which were scarcely big enough to admit a little finger; they increase the weight of some slight condemnation; they bring their muskets to the support of the heavy artillery of the newspaper. Scarcely aware of the harm he does, the blagueur smokes his cigar on the boulevard, his hands in his overcoat pockets, looking out for "dead to

make," imbeciles to kill. Ridicule is a species of government security which brings in about ten francs a day to the blagueur. He ridicules the rich, great lions, benefactions, crimes, business, loans, — in short, everything that can rise and fall.

The Duc d'Orléans is killed, Gannal wants to embalm him, the prince's surgeon claims the right; in the midst of the general mourning a blagueur, on seeing the claim of the two surgeons, exclaims: "What a jolly article to make": and out it comes, ridiculing the surgeon and Gannal and the operation itself.

The "Phalanx" is started to put forward Fourier's doctrine. The blagueur sees endless articles in that philosophy and begins: —

"Saint-Simon proposed to make twenty paupers out of one rich man, but the 'Four Movements' of Fourier, corrector of proofs in his life-time, is a very different social philosophy: you are to work with folded arms, you will have no corns on your feet, lawyers will make their fortune without extracting a penny from clients, legs of mutton will go roasted through the streets, and chickens will spit themselves. When you are fifty years old, or thereabouts, you will grow a little tail, thirty-two feet in length, which you will manœuvre with grace and elegance; the moon will have little ones, *pâtés de fois gras* will grow in the fields, the clouds will rain champagne, thaws will make Roman punch, lacqueys will be kings of France, and ten-sous pieces will be worth forty francs," and so forth.

### *Third variety.* The fisherman on the line.

All the little journals pay their writers so much a line, one, or two sous, according to the number of subscribers. The *Charivari*, the matador of little journalism, is the only one which has solved the problem of giving a caricature daily. This collection will certainly some day be one of the most precious of our epoch. If you ask the cleverest of these writers to inveigh against some great talent from



day to day — Ingres for instance, or Victor Hugo — off they go, and it will be a month before the *Charivari* will think these jokes excessive. Every third day you will find under the caricatures of Daumier, delightful couplets and quatrains which force you to laugh, and beneath Gavarni's work you can read admirable scenes of manners and morals in four lines as droll and incisive as the drawing itself. Gavarni is inexplicable in his fertility, like the paper with its *lazzis*. Consequently this sheet, the existence of which is a perpetual misdemeanour, has three thousand subscribers.

The fisherman on the line lives, like a fisherman, by his line. Daily he uses the most precious qualities of his mind in carving a jest in two columns; he cuts his phrases into points, he exhausts himself in producing the flowers of his mind in that species of bad resort of the imagination called the "little journal." Too late he discovers his dissipation. Though he often ends by being the dupe of his own jests, he has inoculated himself with absurdities after having ridiculed them, as a doctor dies of the plague. At this trade, the most vigorous of minds loses the sense of the great; everything in the social state has dwindled to him by dint of laughing at it.

The "little journal" has of late become ten times more witty than it was in the beginning under the Restoration. A perpetual sarcasm upon men and things has been going on for the last ten years with equal spirit and effrontery. It spares neither age, nor rank, nor royalty, nor women, nor works of talent, nor men of genius. It diminishes power, conspiracies, and the most serious acts; it could granulate granite and split diamonds. The "Satire Ménippée" pales beside the book that a clever man could extract from this daily journalist production due to nameless young men. This spring is so prodigal of wit, so keen, so animated, so constantly aggressive, that quite recently (1841) the English have been forced to avow openly that

nothing to compare with the publication of our "little journal" has hitherto existed in any country, in any period. All this has been invented and is daily printed for the enjoyment of that sultan sodden in pleasures, named PARIS.

Alas! France is colossal even in her petty things, even in her vices, even in her faults!

Foreigners who admire our men of talent do not know the price at which is sold in Paris fame, vogue, all species of distinction, even the sad favour of occupying the public mind with one's self for a few moments. You who can read between the lines shudder!

*Fourth variety.* The Anonymous.

Pupil of Grisier.

*Fifth variety.* The Guerilla.

For the last three years a new style of publication has come up. The monthly journal, full of cleanliness to attract innocence, full of personalities, little fireside anecdotes, vamped-over reflections, has invited the public, gun in hand, to pay it twenty sous, and instantly ten or a dozen other soldiers raised the banner, format-thirty-two, imitating the inventor, whose invention consisted in trying to make wit once a month, just as the little journals make it daily. The author of the first of these publications took for epigraph these words: "I shall speak my whole thought and be as inexorable to men as to things. Not a single newspaper would dare to publish in this novel and bold manner."

No, surely, no newspaper would venture to publish the rapid trash, as "novel as it is bold."

Though this new style is only an epidemic, essentially ephemeral in a land which spends its time in turning out its governments just as it changes the format of its books every five years, there is in it the future of a periodical literature. Having passed in review the groups, it was necessary to speak of it here, albeit an isolated variety.

## CONCLUSION.

Such is the census of the forces of the PRESS, a word adopted to express all that is periodically published in politics and in literature; where is judged the works of those who govern and those who write—two methods of leading men. You have now seen the running gear of the machine; as to seeing it in operation, that is a sight which can be seen only in Paris and London; outside of Paris its effects are felt, but its methods are not comprehended. Paris is like the sun; it lights and warms, but from a distance. At thirty-two kilometres the ablest diplomatist is reduced to conjectures on the essence of that light. The sun is perhaps, like the press, a great skimmer: *écumoire*.

The press of London has not the same action upon the world as the press of Paris; it is in some sort special to England, which carries its egoism into everything. This egoism ought to call itself patriotism, for patriotism is nothing else than egoism of country. We ought to remark here the immense difference that exists between English journalists and French journalists. The Englishman is English first and journalist afterwards; the Frenchman is journalist before all else and he is not French until later. Thus the English newspapers never commit the fault of giving out the secrets of the cabinet when it is a question of getting any advantage outside; whereas to get subscribers the French press will gabble about all political arcana; it takes for its base this

MAXIM: *To the newspaper man all that is probable is true.*

The palm is to him who pulls the veil from cabinet plans. Abd-el-Kader said naively: "I have no better spies than the French newspapers." Only yesterday a paper declared that England and the United States had rights of property in the Marquesas Islands anterior to the taking possession

of them by France; and yet that paper calls itself the *National*.

Between the chances of a fall and the liberty of the press, Napoleon did not hesitate.

Certainly it would have been very easy to paint the men of the press to you with their manners and morals, and to show them in the exercise of their pretended priesthood; but *things* seem to me more curious than men. To-day this chronic disease of France is spreading everywhere. It has subjected justice to its laws; it has struck the legislator with terror, for he now regards publicity as a more cruel punishment than all his own penal inventions. It holds in submission royalty, private industry, the family, and personal interests. In short, it has made the whole of France a little town, in which people are more uneasy about *what will be said of it* than about the welfare of the country.

The number of the Levites of this divinity does not exceed one thousand. The least among them is a man of intelligence, in spite of his mediocrity, which is only relative. That nothing may be lacking to the singularities of the press, there have been two women and two priests in it; now there is but one woman and one priest,—two gowns!

Perhaps the subscribers are more inexplicable than the newspapers and the newspaper men. They see their trusted paper changing its hatreds, full of sudden benevolence for public men against whom it had fired broadsides for months, lauding to-day that which it depreciated yesterday, allying itself with those of the fraternity with whom it was boxing the month or the year before; and yet they continue to read it and trust it, and to subscribe with an intrepidity of abnegation not to be understood between man and man.

The press, like woman, is wonderful and sublime when it tells a lie; it, and she, never lets go of you till it has

forced you to believe it and her; they both display the highest qualities in this struggle, where the public, as helpless as the husband, invariably succumbs.

MAXIM: *If the press did not exist it ought not to be invented.*

But there is in human events a superior force which discussion, which the gabble of men, printed or not, cannot efface.

In order to last, the present government ought to save itself by two laws, on the very point where Charles X. perished by two ordinances. And these two laws would probably be voted in both Chambers by large majorities.

## ORDER GENDELETTRE.

*First Species: THE PUBLICIST.*

The Journalist	varieties.	The Marquis de Tuffière.	
		{ The tenor. The maker of leading articles. The Maître Jacques. The reporter of the Chambers.	
The Statesman	varieties.	{ The politician. The attaché.	
		{ The detached attaché. The politician à brochure.	
The Pamphleteer.		{ No variety.	
		{ No variety.	
The Nothingarian.		{ No variety.	
		{ No variety.	
The Publicist in Public office.		{ No variety.	
		{ No variety.	
The Monobible writer.		{ Sub-species lost.	
		{ The prophet. The un-believer. The disciple.	

Sub-species.

*Second Species: THE CRITIC.*

The Critic of the Vieille Roche.	varieties.	{ The University man.	
		{ The Society man.	
The blond Young Critic.	varieties.	{ The jester.	
		{ The censor-bearer.	
The Great Critic.	varieties.	{ The executioner. The	
		{ euphuist.	
The Feuillettonist.		{ No variety.	
		{ The little Journalists.	
The bravo.		{ The blagueur.	
		{ The fisher. The anonymous.	
The guerilla.		{ The guerilla.	

Sub-species.

Synoptical table for use in the Monograph of the Parisian Press.

EXTRACT FROM THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE BIMANE IN SOCIETY.



## VII.

## LITERATURE. BALZAC'S OWN WORKS.

*The Comédie Humaine, Translator's Note. M. Félix Davin's Introduction to the Études de Mœurs. Letter from Balzac to M. Hippolyte Castille.*

## [THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE, TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

IN studying Balzac's personal life and correspondence the reader is more and more struck by the fact that the life of his mind was in his writings. His letters teem with his affections, his worries, with the mechanical part of his books, with the strain of his life outside of his working hours; but his thought, his philosophy, his insight, the perceptions that made his work are chiefly in that work only. In this respect he seems to have been two men.

His outer life, even his affections, did not influence his work very much, if at all; certainly not in a direct manner, except as it supplied the material for his work. Nor does he speak to others in his correspondence, and apparently not in conversation, of what went on within him in his solitary working-hours. Of course there are some exceptions to this remark, especially in his letters to Madame Carraud, and Madame Hanska, but they are comparatively few. He lived alone with his inspiration in a remarkable solitude of spirit as of body, and when he issued from his work into the world he seems for a time to have parted from it. He did not, apparently,

communicate his inner thought to others, except through the medium of the books he made in solitude.

If this be so, the student has the great advantage of feeling that he holds the key to Balzac's philosophy in his own hands, and needs no side-lights to evolve it; a patient study of the works will give it to him. Balzac, however, has not failed to put into his hand a starting clue. In his preface to the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*, and in "Louis Lambert," the conclusion of the earthly philosophy of the work, he says:—

"Thought, the fountain of all good and of all evil, thought—or rather passion, which is thought and feeling combined—is the social element and bond, and it is also an element of destruction." . . . "My desire has always been," he says elsewhere, "to determine the actual relation which exists between man and God. Is not that the necessity of our epoch? Without some high convictions and certainties it is impossible to curb societies." . . . "Man is the end and object of all terrestrial means and methods, but may he not be himself the means to some end? If a man is linked to all about him is there nothing above him to which he is linked? The action of the universe is not mere folly; it must have some end, and that end cannot be a society like ours."

The latter clause is the speculation of Balzac's mind, growing out of his work and out of the intuitions of his spirit; but the first clause is the basis of the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*. "Thought, the fountain of all good and of all evil, thought—or rather passion, which is thought and feeling combined—is the social element and bond, and it is also an element of destruction."

Grasping with all the force and variety of his genius this truth, he yet fails to see that it is the half-truth of the whole truth, namely: Thought is the divine thread which connects each of us with the Divine image in which we are made, and thought is the broad current which

connects us into one brotherhood. In this truth lies the destiny of the human soul, to which it must attain, since this element of the Divine Good within it is indestructible.

This is the one Truth; on the half-truth of which Balzac has based his *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*. Historian of existing society, he could not base it elsewhere. But the great divine truth must live, namely: that in Thought, coming from the Divine, lies an indestructible power in man to conform himself, and thus society, to the Divine good. This is the law. The half-truth, or the reverse of this truth must pass away. Thought not only will, but it must, cease to be the element of destruction, and will become the element of life. In that day—it may be near, it is *now* to many a soul—a new divinely human comedy will be shown, of which this human comedy has been the foreshadowing. It cannot be written about; it must first be lived; but the current once loosed, who can tell how soon or with what might it may overflow the threshold?

It will be said (giving a bird's-eye glance over human society) that this is the millennium. Perhaps it is; but it is as much in the power of the criminal in his cell as of the bishop on his bench or the saintliest soul on earth to bring about—perhaps more so.

The half-truth taught by Balzac is not less true, not less essential to know and study—for does it not explain the world?—but the other is the vital whole, and explains, if we will study it, futurity; not the futurity of a vague, uncertain heaven, but that of a practical heaven about us. This is the vital truth that is dawning upon the world at the close of the nineteenth century, namely (to repeat it once more): Thought is the medium between our spirit and the Divine spirit, the vehicle conveying the Divine good into our spirits; it is also a current, visible and invisible, connecting us with other men in a common brotherhood; it is a possession and a law to all souls

alike; and the appointed means by which the divine Law of Good shall work. It cannot be lost; it may be buried — as it now is. None the less, however, did Balzac do a mighty and essential thing in teaching its lesser, but correlative truth. It was all that he could teach, being the historian of existing society.

It must not be thought, however, that Balzac's philosophy was a fixed system. Far from it. He gathered in through his various faculties, his poetic instincts, his imagination, his powers of observation, his seer-like perceptions, an almost heterogeneous mass of facts and ideas, on which he speculated. But his *conviction* — that on which he based the COMÉDIE HUMAINE — is given in the foregoing passages.

It is with this clue in hand that the student should study him; in fact, it is with this clue that Balzac himself asks to be studied; and as the COMÉDIE HUMAINE is the history of the working of thought and passion for good and evil (chiefly evil) in man, it is best to begin the study of it, as Balzac desired, in its earlier stages before going up to "Louis Lambert," its earthly conclusion, or to "Séraphita," its spiritual crown.

So then, it is not enough to read Balzac as the mere dramatist of the comedy of human life. That comedy, like humanity itself, grew out of something for which the student must seek. But here again there is no hard and fast rule of philosophy, or even of consistency in this greatest work of genius of the nineteenth century. We must not expect to find Balzac always in keeping with his main idea; he did not write to deliberately establish it; he was no cool philosopher, evolving his philosophy in the solitude of his study; he was a poet, a dramatist, sensitive to all the changing scenes of life, liable to the inconsistencies of the imagination, even though the real inspiration of his work was never forgotten, perhaps never in his mind obscured. He wrote as he found things with the eye of a

*Bronze Statue of Balzac.*









seer, and he often lets them adjust themselves to his idea as they can. Genius does not always represent to itself with the eye of a critic, a discerner, the full meaning of what it does, or even what it means. It is impelled by its own being to what it does with the unerring instinct, or shall we say the divining, of the seer — the active use of that thread that connects it with the Divine; the thread that is inalienably in every soul, as its birthright more or less developed.

In this way Balzac was a creator. He divined types of human nature and he created beings to represent them. Let the student take — and here I point out to him once more the great value of having Balzac's real being and mind in the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*, and therefore, as it were, in his own hand without need of an interpreter — let him take the great passions and see how, under many phases of each passion, Balzac worked out his underlying conviction. Or let him analyze the essence, meaning, and co-ordination with that central idea of his countless types: the miser, the usurer, the woman of Parisian society, the woman of domestic life, the young man, the artist, the courtesan, the priest, the politician, the notary, the man of business honest and dishonest, Balthazar Claës, Père Goriot, Véronique, Pierrette, Cousine Bette, Dr. Benassis, Vautrin (all types of themselves); and the provincial types, the official, the lawyer, the country magnate, the peasant.

Such a course of study will, if I am not mistaken, bring a man to a clear understanding of the whole work and of how it leads up in the end to the Philosophical series and its crown. At any rate, it was Balzac's intention that it should do so.

It is sometimes asked in which direction Balzac's genius worked freest, and in which, therefore, his gifts were the more swiftly and deeply fertilized. He himself divided his work into sections, and classed those sections into two

parts: Studies of Manners and Morals, and Philosophical Studies. In the sections of the first part which he completed, namely, those which painted individual life (the others were scarcely touched) he seems to have worked with more internal vigour, clearness, composure, and power in the Scenes of Provincial life; probably because these were intended by him to express the life of manhood. His classifications may have been a little arbitrary, a little twisted to suit the mould of his idea, — in fact, up to the last year of his life he was constantly rearranging his sections, — but the Scenes of Provincial life were intended (he tells us himself) to represent life issuing from youth, losing its candour, but not yet reaching the period when true feeling is rare, when generous ideas are means of selfishness, and honour becomes a matter of social position. The Scenes representing the latter should, he believes, be placed in the frame of a great city.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason for his freer work in the Scenes of Provincial and Country life may be found in his own nature; in his deep comprehension and love, deeper than mere love, of Nature. Except in his books, where it remains to us a precious possession, this quality seldom appears elsewhere in his life; yet his solitary working-days must sometimes have been filled with it, for the matchless description of the Norway fiord and the “majesty of cold,” depicts that which his eyes had never seen. He was a seer of Nature, as well as of human nature.

The history of the first growth and arrangement of the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE* and of Balzac’s singular method of publishing his books piecemeal is quite bewildering to the reader, and the study of it is of little practical use. But there are a few main facts concerning this habit which it is well to bear in mind.

He was poor; weighed down by a load of debt, honourably incurred, which he loyally strove to pay. His sister

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.

says : " Honoré at the age of twenty-nine possessed nothing but debts, and his pen with which to pay them. . . . The recollection of those years brings back such anguish to my mind that I cannot think of them even now without sadness. From 1828 to 1836 my brother could not support himself and meet his obligations without drawing notes, the maturing of which kept him in a state of perpetual anxiety ; for he had nothing with which to meet them but the profits of his pen, and the time at which he could finish each book was uncertain. . . . To pacify the more pressing of his creditors, he performed actual prodigies of labour from time to time." <sup>1</sup>

It was for these reasons, often to get the necessaries of life, and also to satisfy the impatience of publishers that he printed his works piecemeal. Episodes, and even single chapters in his books were printed in newspapers and periodicals ; so that no judgment could fairly be formed on their real value and object.

The idea of uniting his work into the one great whole of the COMÉDIE HUMAINE, thus forming a complete society, first occurred to him in the year 1833, about the time of the publication of " The Country Doctor," four years after the publication of the first book to which he put his name, " The Chouans." The first edition of the COMÉDIE HUMAINE, with its preface, was issued April 23, 1842. Meantime in 1834, he began to collect and publish his scattered writings under the title of *Études de Mœurs au XIX.<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Studies of Manners, Customs, and Morals in the nineteenth century). These he subdivided into Scenes, just as they now stand in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

To these volumes he put prefaces, which were afterwards suppressed, partly by himself when he began to co-ordinate his work into the great whole, and partly by his publishers to save space. For the same reason (to save space) the

<sup>1</sup> See " Memoir of Balzac," belonging to this edition, pages 70-82. 89.

publishers suppressed in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE all the headings of chapters, — an injury to his work which Balzac never ceased to regret. In the present translated edition these headings have been, for the first time, replaced as far as practicable. The suppressed prefaces here follow; omitting such parts as had a temporary meaning, but retaining those that bear upon the work itself. To several of these prefaces are added such of Balzac's serious remarks upon the book in question as are found in his "Correspondence."

When the first collected series of the *Études de Mœurs* was published in 1834, Balzac gave notes of the manner in which his work should be regarded to his friend M. Félix Davin, who wrote them out in the form of an Introduction. This was suppressed in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE, but is here given, slightly abridged. When the *Études Philosophiques* followed the *Études de Mœurs*, in 1835, Balzac again employed M. Davin as his mouthpiece in an Introduction, which appeared in the fourth edition of that series (1836). This was likewise omitted in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE; but a translation is here given of such parts as relate to Balzac's idea of his work. It is easy to distinguish in both these Introductions the ideas that Balzac desired to convey from the warm admiration of his friend.<sup>1</sup>

[M. DAVIN'S INTRODUCTION TO THE ÉTUDES DE MŒURS.]

Every human work is produced in a certain order which enables the eye to take in details and connect them with the general mass; that order presupposes divisions. If the *Études de Mœurs* were lacking in this architectural

<sup>1</sup> These Introductions, long out of print, will be found in full in the "Histoire des Œuvres de H. de Balzac," by M. le V<sup>te</sup> de Lovenjoul, pp. 46 and 194: Calmann Lévy: Paris.



harmony it would be impossible to discover the thought of this work; all would be confused to the eye and wearisome to the mind. Therefore, before examining this series we must grasp its leading lines; pretty plainly set forth, however, in the titles of the sections that compose it:—

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Scenes of Private life. | 4. Scenes of Political life. |
| 2. “ of Provincial life.   | 5. “ of Military life.       |
| 3. “ of Parisian life.     | 6. “ of Country life.        |

Each of these divisions expresses evidently one aspect of our social world, and the mere statement of them at once reproduces the undulations of human life.

In the Scenes of Private life, life is taken between the last developments of puberty which ends and the first calculations of virility that begins. Here are chiefly emotions, unreflecting sensations; here are faults committed less by will than by inexperience and ignorance of the ways of the world; here, to women, evil comes from their belief in the sincerity of sentiments, or from their attachment to dreams which the teachings of life will disperse. The young man is pure; misfortunes are born of the ignored antagonism produced by social laws between the most natural desires and the most imperious wishes of our instincts in all their vigour; here sorrow has for its element the first and most excusable of our errors. This first view of human destiny was without any possible frame; youth is everywhere, and the author went everywhere in search of it—here, in the quiet of the country; there, in the provinces; and anon, in Paris.

The Scenes of Provincial life are intended to represent that phase of human life in which passions, calculations, and ideas take the place of sensations, of unreflecting emotions, of images accepted as realities. At twenty years of age feelings are generous; at thirty all is esti-

mated, man becomes selfish. Many writers would have been contented to end their task here, but this author, loving difficulties to conquer, has given this phase a frame; he has chosen the simplest apparently, the most neglected until now, but the most harmonious and the richest in half-tints, namely: provincial life. There, in pictures narrow in limits, but the canvas of which presents subjects which touch all the great general interests of society, the author has striven to show under a thousand aspects the great transition by which men pass from emotion without mental guile to the most calculating ideas. Life becomes serious; practical interests conflict at every moment with violent passions as well as with candid hopes. Disillusion begins; here the jarring of the social mechanism reveals itself; there the daily shock of moral or pecuniary interests strike out a drama, perhaps a crime, in the bosom of the calmest families. The writer unveils a paltry squabbling, the perpetual renewal of which focusses the keenest interest on the slightest details of existence. He initiates us into the secret of these mean rivalries, these jealousies of neighbourhood, these household bickerings, the force of which, increasing daily, degrades men after a time, and weakens the stoutest will. The graces of the dream vanish; man sees, as he believes, correctly; he values in life the happiness of materialities, where, in the Scenes of Private life, he gave himself up to Platonism. Woman reasons instead of feeling; she calculates her fall in cases where she would once have given herself. Life has darkened as it ripened.

In the Scenes of Parisian life, questions enlarge; existence is there painted with broad strokes; it comes gradually to the age that touches decrepitude. A city, a capital city, was the only frame possible for these paintings of a climacteric period, in which infirmities afflict the heart of man no less than they do his body. Here true

sentiments are exceptions and are crushed by the play of interests ground beneath the wheels of this mechanical world; virtue is there calumniated, innocence is sold; passions give place to ruinous tastes and vices; all is sophistry; all things analyze themselves, and sell, and buy themselves; 'tis a bazaar where everything is ticketed with its price; calculations are made in open day without shame; humanity has no longer any but two forms — the deceiver and the deceived; the triumph is to him who subjects civilization to himself, and squeezes it for himself alone; the death of grandfathers is awaited; the honest man is a ninny; generous ideas are means; religion is considered a necessity of government, rectitude becomes a position; all things are bought and sold; ridicule is an advertisement and a passport; young men are a hundred years old, and they insult old age.

With the Scenes of Parisian life the painting of individual life comes to an end. In these three galleries of pictures each man has seen himself young, a man, and an old man. Life has bloomed, as the author says, "under the solar power of love;" then calculation set in, love became passion, force produced abuse; till at last the accumulation of selfish interests and the continual satisfaction of the senses, the blunting of the soul, and implacable necessities, have led to the extremes of Parisian life. All is then said about man as man.

The Scenes of Political life when written will express thoughts that are broader. The persons placed on the scene will represent the interests of the masses; they will stand above the laws to which were subjected the personages in the three preceding series. This time it will not be the play of private interests that the author will depict; but the awful movement of the social machine, and the contrasts produced by private interests mingling in public interests. Up to this time the author has shown thought and sentiments in constant opposition to society;

but in the Scenes of Political life he will show thought in presence of an organizing force, and sentiment completely abolished. Here the situations present a sort of grandiose comedy, also tragedy. The personages have behind them a people and a monarchy face to face; they symbolize in themselves the past, the future or its transitions, they struggle no longer with individuals, but with personified convictions, with the resistances of the moment represented by men.

The Scenes of Military life are the outcome of the Scenes of Political life. Nations have interests; these interests are formulated among certain privileged men destined to lead the masses for whom they stipulate, putting them in motion. The Scenes of Military life are therefore designed to paint, in their principal features, the life of the masses marching to combat. They will no longer contain household scenes taken in cities, but the painting of a whole country; the manners and morals of individuals will no longer be dealt with, but those of an army; the stage will be no longer an apartment but a battlefield, the struggle no longer that of man to man, of a man and a woman, or of two women against each other, but the shock of France against Europe, against the throne of the Bourbons, which a few noble souls in La Vendée strove to re-erect, or else the emigration struggling against the Republic in Brittany, — two convictions which allowed themselves all license as did Catholics and Protestants in other days. In short it will be the Nation itself, sometimes triumphant, sometimes vanquished. “*The Chouans*,” the second edition of which is almost exhausted, belongs to the Scenes of Military life; and “*La Bataille*,” already advertised several times, is delayed in publication only by scruples full of modesty. This book, known to several friends, forms one of the grandest pictures of this series in which abound so many heroic figures, so many dramatic

incidents consecrated by history that no romance-writer could have invented the beauties that are in it.<sup>1</sup>

After the dazzling pictures of this series will come the calmer paintings of Country life. In the scenes of that life we shall meet men who are galled by the world and by revolutions, half broken by the fatigues of war, and disgusted with politics. There we shall find repose after motion, landscapes instead of interiors, the sweet and uniform occupations of a life of nature after the bustle and turmoil of Paris — scars after wounds; and yet, always the same self-interests, the same struggle, though weaker in default of contact, like as passions are softened by solitude. This last part of the work will be like the evening of an over-busy day, the evening of a hot day — evening with its solemn tints, its brown reflections, its tinted clouds, its flashes of heat-lightning, its low muttered thunder. Religious ideas, true philanthropy, virtue without assumption, resignations of all kinds, will there be seen in their full power, attended by their poesy, like the prayer of a family at night. The white hairs of age will mingle with the golden curls of childhood. The broad contrasts of this splendid part with its preceding parts will not be comprehended until the whole series of the *Études* is finished.

To him who wishes to enter into the theme of each series with all its consequences, who can divine the variations and comprehend the importance of it, and yet sees these thousand figures without considering the bond which makes them all converge towards a luminous centre, there must surely be enough to make him distrust the building

<sup>1</sup> "La Bataille de Dresde," repeatedly mentioned in Balzac's Correspondence as nearly finished. It never appeared; held back perhaps till other Scenes of Military Life were ready. In Appendix I. will be found the names of the volumes Balzac intended for that series. Many of the localities he studied on the spot, especially those of Dresden, Wagram, and Austerlitz. — Tr.

and doubt the architect. Already have we heard predictions of the author's discouragement; already his failure is predicted by envious minds, which would procure it if they could. But though the extent of the work does indeed seem immense, the author brings to bear upon it a power, an energy equal to the length and difficulty of the enterprise. Nevertheless, he does not deceive himself as to his strength. If he has his moments of courage, he has his moments of doubt also. Those do not know him who accuse him of want of modesty and of exaggeration because of the belief which every man should have in himself if he means to write.

The *Études de Mœurs* would be a species of "Arabian Nights," a very durable collection of tales, novels, narratives like many others, without the thought that unites all the parts to one another, without the vast trilogy which will be formed by the three parts of the whole work when completed. We owe the unity of this work to a reflection which M. de Balzac made early in life on the combined whole of Walter Scott's work. He told it to the present writer in giving him advice as to the broad meaning a writer must express by his work in order to hold a place in the language. "It is not enough to be a man," he said, "one must be a system. Voltaire was a thought as much as Marius, and he triumphed. Great as he was, the great Scotchman did no more than exhibit a certain number of stones skilfully carved, on which we see admirable figures and behold again the genius of each epoch; nearly all are sublime; but where is the building? We find in Walter Scott all the seductive effects of a marvellous analysis, but the synthesis is lacking. Genius is not complete unless it joins to the faculty of creating the power of co-ordinating its creations. It is not enough to observe and paint, one must paint and observe with a purpose. But remember that to live in literature to-day is more a question of time than of talent. Before you can



get into communication with the sound and healthy part of the public you must drink the cup of anguish for years; you must swallow ridicule and endure injustice; for the ballot of enlightened persons, by which your name should be glorified, is only cast one by one, in single votes."

M. de Balzac started from this observation, which he often repeated to his friends, to realize slowly, bit by bit, his *Études de Mœurs*, which are nothing less than an exact representation of society in all its aspects. Its unity was to be the world; man was only a detail; for he proposed to paint him in all the situations of his life, to describe him with all his angles, to seize him in all his phases, consequent and inconsequent, neither completely good, nor completely vicious, struggling against laws made in his interests, fighting against morals in his sentiments, logical or grand by chance. He proposed also to show society incessantly dissolved, incessantly recomposed, threatening because she is threatened; in short, to attain to the design of the whole by reconstructing, one by one, its elements. A subtle work, wholly of analysis slow and patient, which will long be incomplete.

From the pale, enfeebled physiognomies of the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the people of the present day, M. de Balzac has known how to choose the fleeting lineaments, the delicate shades, the faint traits hidden from common eyes. He has burrowed into habits, anatomized gestures, scrutinized looks and inflections of voice and face, which say nothing, or say perpetually the same thing, to others. And he never forgets, in the most succinct or the most lengthy of his portraitures, either the countenance of a personage, or the set of his clothes, or his house, or even the article of furniture to which that personage had particularly communicated his thought. Certainly one might say of him that he has made La Rochefoucauld's maxims walk and talk, and given life to the observations of Lavater by applying them. He knows

the thing, the means, to be obtained from bric-à-brac, from rags, from the language of a porter, from the gesture of a mechanic, from the way a merchant leans against his door-post, just as well as he knows what to take from the solemn moments of life and the almost imperceptible refinements of the heart. One wonders how he ever could have known the poor home of that mother of a family where Genestas enters; in what strange place did he meet Butifer, the shepherd revolting against the laws of society in the fields, and Vautrin, the man who laughs at the whole of civilization, kneading it in the very heart of Paris, and ruling it from the depths of the galleys? When did he study the village and the chateau, the little town and the great city, the people, the bourgeoisie and the great world, man and woman? For he had to learn all, see all, and forget nothing; he had to know all the difficulties in the way of doing good, and all the facilities for doing evil.

Certainly no author has ever known better how to make himself bourgeois with the bourgeois, workman with workmen; no one has ever better seen into the heart of a young man, into that of Rastignac, that type of a penniless young man; no one has ever sounded deeper the heart of a loving and haughty duchess like Madame de Langeais, or that of the bourgeoisie who found happiness in marriage, Madame Jules. He has not only penetrated the mysteries of the quiet humble life of the provinces, but he has cast into that monotonous picture enough interest to make us care for the figures he puts there. Besides all this, he has the secrets of all industries; he is a printer with David Séchard, a usurer with Gobseck, a lawyer with Derville, a notary with many, a man of science with savants. But would it not be an error to believe that so much experience could actually be in so young a man? Was not time lacking to him for all that?

Yes; M. de Balzac is doubtless led by intuition, that rarest attribute of the human spirit. But must he not have suffered to have painted suffering so wonderfully? Must he not long have pondered over the forces of society and the forces of individual thought to have pictured the combat so plainly?

What we should especially thank him for is that he gives radiance to virtue, mitigates the colours of vice, and makes himself understood by men in general as well as by philosophers by putting himself within reach of mediocre intellects and by interesting every one through his fidelity to truth. But what a task to be true in *La Fosseuse*, and true in the *Duchesse de Langeais*; true in the *Maison Vanquer* and in *Sophie Gamard*; true in the *rue de Tourniquet* with that poor lace-worker and true in *Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille*; true in describing the household of a prostitute as well as the cottage of *Galope-Chopine*, where rises in grandeur for a moment *Barbette*, his wife, that sublime Breton woman; true on the Carrousel depicting *Napoleon*, true in the *Claës*, and true in the country solitude where a *Deserted woman* weeps. But true, remember, inwardly as well as externally in the physiognomy, true in language as in clothes.

In short, does it not seem necessary to have known all, of the world, the arts, the sciences, before undertaking to configure society with its organic and dissolving elements, its powers and its weaknesses, its different moralities and its infamies? But, even so, it was not enough to know all; that *all* had to be executed; it was not enough to think, it was necessary to incessantly produce; it was not enough to produce, the obligation was upon him to please. To make our epoch accept its own face in a vast mirror it was essential to give it hopes. The writer was therefore compelled to be consoling where the world was cruel, never to mingle shame with our laughter, and to shed a balm upon our hearts after exciting us to tears. He

could not send the spectator of his comedy away without a comforting thought; he must let it be seen and believed that man was good after showing him to us as evil, and grand when he was petty. For this he placed Juana beside Diard, Mademoiselle de Verneuil in "The Chouans" beside Mademoiselle Michonneau in "Père Goriot" — two identical personages, one of whom is all poesy, the other all reality; the one magnificent and possible, the other true and horrible. Face to face with Hulot he put Corentin, Colonel Chabert with his wife, Margaret Claës with her father, and Benassis in his village.

Moreover, it was necessary to find literary resources in the uniformity of virtue; and it is not, to superior minds, a slight merit to have found them in the involuntary variations given by sentiments. If the Duchesse de Langeais, Madame de Beauséant, Madame de Mortsauf, Eugénie Grandet, La Fosseuse, Madame Firmiani, Nanon, Benassis, Chabert, Gondrin, César and François Birotteau, Madame Claës, Juana, are as dissimilar as distinct creations can be, they are assuredly all marked with the same die, that of sentiment misleading for a moment virtue. For this, it was necessary to know woman as well as man; to show that she is never faulty except through emotion, whereas the man sins always deliberately, and never rises except by imitating woman.

Thus all classes and forms have come beneath his pen, the fertility of which confounds us because it excludes neither exactness nor observation; houses and interiors, portraits and costumes are painted as well as the recesses of the heart and the aberrations of the mind, and science and mysticism. Also he is a great landscape painter. His valley of the Dauphiné in "The Country Doctor," the beautiful views of Brittany which adorn "The Chouans," the woodland scenes in "The Two Brothers," the wondrous sketch of Norway in "Séraphita," that of the island of the Mediterranean in "Duchesse de Langeais," and

the corner of Auvergne in "The Magic Skin" are, among many others, eminent passages in our modern literature.

In the three series which so far compose the publication of his work has not the author already fulfilled the conditions of the vast programme we have now explained? By studying the parts of the edifice already erected, by entering those sketched-out galleries and vaulted halls, as yet only half-roofed in, but later to echo with solemn tones, by examining these carvings to which a patient chisel has given youth and the fulness of life, we shall divine many things behind those external appearances. . . .

When a writer resolves to configure, to embody a whole epoch, when he calls himself the historian of the manners, customs, and morals of the nineteenth century, and when the public accords him that title, he cannot, no matter what prudery may say, he cannot choose between the beautiful and the ugly, the moral and the vicious; he cannot separate the chaff from the wheat, the tender and loving women from the rigid and virtuous ones. He must, under pain of being incorrect and false, say what is, and show what he sees. Wait, in order to hold the scales, until his work is completed, and, whatever comes of it, attribute the greater or less honour to his models only — unless, indeed, his portraits are not likenesses, which no one, I imagine, has yet said of them. If all is true, it is not the work which is immoral. As for the right the painter arrogates to himself to arraign his epoch, rebuke its vices, and sound its heart, it belongs to all pulpits from which the preachers speak.

One of the most profoundly studied creations of M. de Balzac, the one which, after "The Country Doctor," "Louis Lambert," and "Seraphita," has required the most research outside of the ordinary work of the romance-writer, is "Balthazar Claës or the Search for the Alkahest." If we said to a novelist, to a poet (and the poet to be complete, must be the intelligent centre of all things; he ought to

unite in himself the luminous syntheses of all human knowledge), — if we said to a man of imagination at the moment when he approached a subject which touches on all the highest aspects of physical science, “Take care! the poem you are dreaming of will be incomplete if you do not penetrate and comprehend the inward mysteries of physics and chemistry,” do you think that that poet would have the courage to substitute for his aerial creations the arduous calculations and the nomenclatures of science until the hidden spirit of physics and chemistry appeared unveiled before him, bare and dazzling? If he did do this, then he would be a man apart, a true poet. This difficult thing M. de Balzac attempted; and he has succeeded because he is endowed with one of those energetic and obstinate wills which are the first condition to success.

He asked of chemistry what it had done, how far it had gone; he learned its language; then rising by one of those vigorous strokes of a poet's wing which give glimpses of the vast heights up which experimental science toils painfully, he seizes a dazzling hypothesis which may some day, perhaps, be an established truth. If analysis belongs to the learned, intuition belongs to the poet. M. de Balzac has sometimes been reproached for exaggeration; it is said that starting from a true principle he pushes its expression too far. But is not this reproach forgetting that the mission of art is to choose the scattered portions of nature, the details of truth, in order to make a homogeneous and complete whole of them? Critics have found something too ideal in the four personalities of this volume [the “Alkahest”]; the high qualities of genius are too lavishly bestowed on Balthazar, and the devotion of his daughter is too magnificent, too lasting. Are souls as candid and loyal as that of Marguerite's lover? Can deformed women be as seductive and imperial as Madame Claës? This excess of perfections can be a blunder only relatively to the truth of manners and morals. The mission of the artist is



to create great types and to raise the beautiful up to the ideal.

M. de Balzac brings to his task enormous strength, which has made him the great athlete of our literature, but also the most inoffensive of writers. He judges no one; he attacks neither his contemporaries nor their works; he walks, as a critic in doing justice to his character has lately said of him, he walks alone, apart, like a pariah whom the tyranny of his talent has placed under the ban of literature. His conquest, his own, is the truth in art. To attain that conquest, always so difficult, above all to-day when individuality is disappearing from letters as from manners, it was necessary to be *new*. M. de Balzac has known how to be new by gathering that which literature has disdained from the moment it began to make more theories than books. But he has never proclaimed himself a reformer. Instead of crying on the roofs, "Let us bring back art to nature!" he has accomplished laboriously in solitude his share of the literary revolution, while the greater part of our writers have spent themselves on fruitless efforts, without connection or aim. In many, indeed, a conventional nature has taken the place of the false conventions of the classics.

Completely apart from all that is coterie, convention, system, M. de Balzac has introduced into art a naïve and most absolute truth. Sagacious and profound observer, he watches nature incessantly. When he has surprised her, he examines her with infinite precautions; he sees her live and move; he follows the action of fluids and of thought; he decomposes nature, fibre by fibre, and only begins to reconstruct her when he has divined the most imperceptible mysteries of her organic and intellectual life. In recomposing her by this warm galvanism, by these magic injections which give life to bodies, he shows her to us quivering with a fresh animation which amazes and delights us. This science does not exclude imagina-

tion. Indeed, so far from imagination being absent in this patient elaboration, its highest power has been employed in it. Its flights have been controlled, it has been trained to give to the organs of the work the quantity of life that was necessary, neither more nor less. This labour must have been the most difficult of all; for usually the vital principle is so badly apportioned among the crowd of literary embryos in these days that some have it all in their heads, others in their legs, seldom in their hearts. Whereas in M. de Balzac life issues above all from the heart. He triumphs where others perish.

May he, therefore, march on; may he accomplish his work; not looking behind him at the envious cries of a criticism the tape-line of which, too short for the beauties of the whole, is measuring only the imperfections of detail! May he march on; he knows well where he is going. His first works answer to us for those of the future. He is approaching that future, both for his work and for himself. Already the public is comprehending the importance of the *Études de Mœurs*. The *Études Philosophiques* are about to follow, and when the third part of his work, the *Études Analytiques*, has appeared, criticism will be mute before one of the boldest constructions that man ever dared to undertake. Attentive minds will readily recognize the links which attach the *Études de Mœurs* to the *Études Philosophiques*; but if it is necessary, for superficial minds, to sum up in one statement the meaning which issues from all these social effects (so fully laid down and forming a solid ground on which the author bases his examination of their causes), we shall say that to paint the sentiments, passions, interests, and calculations in constant warfare with institutions, laws, customs, and morals, is to show man struggling with his thought, to prepare the way magnificently to the *Études Philosophiques*, in which M. de Balzac will show the ravages of intellect and make us see in that intellect the dissolving element of man in society.

[BALZAC TO M. HIPPOLYTE CASTILLE,  
Editor of *La Semaine*.]

MONSIEUR:

October 11, 1846.

I thank you, first of all, for the criticism published by you in *La Semaine* on LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE. The praise you give my work is so great that cavillers may ask why I should write, and say that the pride of authors is ungovernable. You have given me too noble a part to be accepted without bending under the obligations it imposes. I thank you above all, monsieur, on behalf of authors for the dignity with which you seem willing to consider both writers and letters. It is taking a fine and noble initiative to endeavour to change the habits of criticism, now employed in so many directions in throwing mud upon toilers, in soiling them on pages of which the writers will be ashamed ten years hence. God grant that Frenchmen may cease to depreciate themselves in the eyes of Europe, so watchful of all the works of France, but especially those of our literature.

The motive of my letter, monsieur, is not a personal one. It relates to an error in the criticism taken *en masse* which strikes at all serious literature. I desire, therefore, at once to clear it from the question of personal interest. I will be brief; although in truth I might be excusable for breaking a lance in favour of a work which has occupied me for eighteen years and still requires ten years of toil to be completed. It is now nearly six years, monsieur, since I wrote my last preface to it; since then, I have renounced giving fresh explanations, for no one reads them, as is proved to me by your article; perhaps you alone will read this, and simply because it is addressed to you. But when I meet with a man of intelligence, who has done me the honour to study the plan and the details of the COMÉDIE HUMAINE, as you have done, monsieur, I feel myself obliged to answer him if, in my

opinion, he is mistaken. An author in the olden time when he defended his work found himself in the absurd position of every man who tries to prove to indifferent minds that he is a man of talent. To explain his work, to be his own trumpeter, to strike the picture with his rattan, has always seemed to me grotesque, and to-day it is senseless.

Formerly a good book defended itself by its own merits; but to-day how can we oppose the claims of our work against criticism? Who can await the real judgment of the public? Reflect on this result presented by statistics: You put forth an opinion which may injure a book in a newspaper which has twenty thousand subscribers. That paper has two hundred thousand readers in ten days. Now supposing the book is published with fifteen hundred copies and has one reader a week (two gratuitous suppositions); the book will have sixty-five thousand readers a year.<sup>1</sup>

The present development of the press in France renders impossible any struggle between books and criticism. Thus all protestation is vain. Prefaces are left uncut as they come from the binder, and, oh, shame! this is true of the books that are most read.

I now come merely to bring new documents, as it were, to the great trial. Where would literature be if its cases were never pleaded? We have a court of appeals, a Supreme court, namely, the future. Happy he who can appear before it.

You have concerned yourself with the moral of my work, and you are wholly right. There is no possible success beyond the mere passing moment, unless the poet's work satisfies the public conscience. I will not

<sup>1</sup> The fallacy of this very amusing "statistic" might have struck the mind of a boy of ten. But it goes far to explain the business tangle of his life. His correspondence teems with just such calculations about his earnings, expenses, and debts. — TR.

reprint here what I have already written in the preface to the COMÉDIE HUMAINE, where all possible answers have been made in advance to critics. Only, inasmuch as I speak at all, I must use it slightly in explaining those personages in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE whom you attack, in good faith I am sure, but whom in the interests of literary discussion, I must defend.

Let us take first the figure of Madame de Mortsauf in "The Lily of the Valley."

Catholicism, monsieur, sanctifies in all its institutions the battle of life, the struggle of the flesh against the spirit, matter against the divine. Everything in our religion tends to subdue that enemy of our future. This is the characteristic by which the Catholic church separates itself from all the old religions. Our religion is, as I have said in "The Country Doctor," "a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of mankind." Madame de Mortsauf is an expression of that constant struggle. If flesh had not uttered a last cry I should not have made her a figure both true and typical as Catholicity. You have not noticed, monsieur, that the victim triumphs, that she dies, her soul free from that last grip, and that the scene you speak of is, in part, the effect of illness. At any rate, it is less a desire than an avowal; more a passionate confession than the tempting of passion. I am ashamed to have to explain a thing which seems to me greater than my work; but this necessity proves that, in spite of the immense progress of Catholicism in France, the religious spirit has not reached criticism, which is still the child of the eighteenth century.

Let us come now to Vautrin. In a few months I shall publish the last part of the "Splendours and Miseries of Courtesans," in which that personage ends. You must permit me to keep the secret of his ending. That personage, who represents corruption, the galleys, social evils in all their horror, has nothing gigantic about him. I can

assure you that his model exists; that he is an awful truth which has its place in the world of our day. The man I speak of is all that Vautrin is, without the passion that I have given him. He is the genius of evil, utilized nevertheless.

In your article you reproach me for taking exceptional characteristics to form my characters and making them gigantic by accumulating nothings. This contradiction carries with it such great praise that I think I must believe you inconsistent. Monsieur, what is life? A mass of little circumstances to which the greatest passions are humble subjects. All is small and mean in the *real*, all becomes great in the upper spheres of the ideal. Without intending to swing my censer before my own nose, I may remark that there is a great distance between the literary production of "Père Goriot," "Lost Illusions," "The Splendour and Misery of Courtesans," and that of "Louis Lambert," "Séraphita," "The Magic Skin," and "Catherine de' Medici."

I have undertaken the history of the whole of society. I have often expressed my plan in this one sentence: "A generation is a drama of five or six thousand salient personages." This drama is my work.

How can I get such a fresco accepted, without the resources of an Arabian tale, without the help of buried titans? In this tempest of a half-century, giants have let loose the floods buried beneath the level of the third social grade. If to obtain so great a result an exceptional personage should sometimes be taken, where is the harm? Do you think that Lovelace does not live? There are five hundred dandies in every generation who are, in themselves, that modern Satan.

Do you believe that a work would be readable if it were forced to scrupulously keep in the place they *really* occupy in the social state the worthy people whose lives are without drama? Why, a single dean of Killerine would crush



my edifice. Such dulness would be a sort of literary cholera that would kill in a round of a hundred pages all my characters. Ah! monsieur, when you, who devote yourself to literature, when *you* have tried to put upon the scene an honest man, a personage acting rightly, and when you have succeeded, as I believe you will, come and see me — you will express a very different opinion to that in your article. Do you know, monsieur, that a work like “The Country Doctor” costs seven years’ toil? Do you know that I have now given five years’ meditation to a work that I have lately announced until the title of “The Brotherhood of Consolation,” which is intended to show charity and religion acting upon Paris as the Country Doctor acted upon his canton? Well, I have recoiled all those years before the immense literary difficulties to be conquered in such a scheme.

It is to such scruples that are due the delays by which I have compromised certain works, like “Sons of the Soil” (now nearly finished) and “The Lesser Bourgeoisie,” set up in the printing-room for the last eighteen months. I kept “César Birotteau” for six years in the condition of a rough sketch, because I despaired of interesting any reader in the figure of a shopkeeper, rather stupid, quite commonplace, whose misfortunes were vulgar and symbolized that which we all ridicule — petty Parisian commerce. Well, monsieur, one lucky day I said to myself: “I will transfigure him by making him the image of *integrity*.” I saw it was possible. Do you call him colossal? Has my poor perfumer cracked his skull against the pediment of my little theatre?<sup>1</sup>

Is Desplein colossal? Ask any of the Faculty who are about you, and they will tell you that they know the original, and that he is not flattered. Remark also that the hero of the “Alkahest” represents the efforts of modern

<sup>1</sup> Balzac has been called the “father of realism;” behold how he regards that matter. — TR.

chemistry, and that any typical personage would become colossal through that one fact. This, however, is a book that is placed among the "Philosophical Studies," where there are none but symbols. Enough about myself.

Now let us come to the great literary question which your article raises for the hundred-thousandth time, — that of the morality of books. What is the surface covered in our social state by vices, passions, immoralities? Do you think that there is one virtuous man out of two? Do you believe in perfection? Should we succeed in changing the morality of an epoch if all authors agreed to publish only such works as those to which the Academy awards the Montyon prize (betraying, as I think, the intention of the founder<sup>1</sup>)? Does an unbeliever ever read the "Imitation of Jesus Christ?"

I think that a writer, when he is able to obtain the ear of the public, does great good by making his reader reflect; but he must retain the right to speak to him, and to make him listen. This right can be kept only through the means by which it was gained, — that of interesting.

If, reading the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*, a young man sees little to blame in the Lousteaus, the Lucien de Rubemprés, etc., that young man is judged and condemned. Whosoever would not prefer, instead of seeking fortune with the scamps and roués, to play the part of honest Birotteau, resemble M. d'Espard, act like the Country Doctor, repent with Madame Graslin, be an upright judge like Popinot, work like David Séchard and d'Arthèz, — in short, model himself upon the good and the virtuous (sown with more profusion in the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE* than in real life), that man is one on whom the most catholic and the most moral books in the world will have no effect.

You will see very few persons who have lost the sentiment of honour end well in the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*; but,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

as Providence does allow itself that hideous jest in our society, the fact is represented.

You say: "But the vicious persons in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE amuse themselves, amuse us, and we are far too much interested in them." Monsieur, if vice did not offer immense seductions, if Satan were not, as the Bible says he is, the finest of angels, who would let his property be squandered by a prostitute, his health by love, his life by debauchery, his talent by idleness?

To moralize his epoch is the object which every writer should put before him, under pain of being a mere amuser of men; but has criticism any new methods to suggest to the writers whom it accuses of immorality? The old method has always been to show the wound. *Lovelace* is the wound in *Richardson's* great work. Look at *Dante*! His "*Paradiso*" is — as poesy, as art, in suavity, in execution — far superior to his "*Inferno*;" yet the "*Paradiso*" is little read; it is the "*Inferno*" which has seized the imagination of the ages. What a lesson! Is it not terrible? What reply does criticism make to it? Even the mild and saintly *Fénelon* felt constrained to invent certain dangerous episodes in *Télémaque*. Remove them and *Fénelon* becomes *Berquin* — plus his style.

The great works, monsieur, exist by their impassioned side. Now passion is excess, it is evil. The writer has nobly fulfilled his task when, taking that element, essential to all literary work, he accompanies it with a great lesson. To my mind, a profoundly immoral work is one that either attacks the bases of society deliberately, or justifies evil, or saps religion, justice, or property. If I present to you *Camusot*, the judge who advances himself by compounding with powerful persons, I have also shown you *Popinot*, the judge-honest-man, the judge who represents in his own person justice as she should be. If I have given you a rascally lawyer I have accompanied him with an honourable one. *Nucingen* and *Birotteau* are

twin works. They are honesty and dishonesty in juxtaposition as they are in the world.

A final argument, monsieur. Suppose a man of genius had accomplished that impossible thing, a drama full of worthy people only. It would not have two representations. Honest men know their duties just as well as scoundrels and vicious men know virtue. The populace who go to see "*l'Auberge des Adrets*" come away saying, "I shall never be that." Robert Macaire is an immense flattery addressed to our epoch. The Robert Macaire in yellow kid gloves says to himself: "As long as the law does n't summon me before it I shall be an honest man." The Robert Macaire in a ragged coat says: "It will end beyond a doubt at the guillotine; I'll take care." That is the only great play of our times; it is truly Aristophanesque; but it is immoral in the sense that it *demonetizes* power and justice without the correction that every dramatic author, taking example by Molière, ought to introduce into his work.

This salutary opposition of good and evil is an incessant labour in the *COMÉDIE HUMAINE*. But what is the fate of great literary erections? To become ruins, from which grow a few twigs, a few flowers. Who knows to-day the names of authors who once attempted such enterprises — whether in Hindostan or in the middle ages — in poems the very titles of which it has now become a science to discover? What vast forgotten epics! I feel half ashamed, in ending my letter, to seem interested myself in this question of morality, which is, in a way, political, and the solution of which is very difficult. The problem terminates at one end in the irreproachable "*Don Quixote*;" at the other in "*Manon Lescaut*," or, if you prefer it "*Candide*." Who would desire to be either Voltaire or the Abbé Prévost?

Perhaps it is with writers as it is with conquerors; they strike the eye only in proportion to the evil they are

obliged to do in order to attain to great results. Voltaire, Rousseau, all the Encyclopedists were profoundly immoral in the eyes of the powers and the religion of their day ; nevertheless, they are the fathers of our nineteenth century. All, from Bonald, Chateaubriand, Béranger, Victor Hugo, Lammenais, George Sand, down to Paul de Kock, Pigault-Lebrun, and myself, are the masons ; the architect is above us. All the writers of the present time are the journeymen toilers for a future which is hidden behind a leaden curtain. If any one of us is in the secret of that future he is the true and the only great man. If Voltaire and Rousseau dreamed of our present France, they never so much as suspected the eleven years which from 1789 to 1800 were, so to speak, the swaddling-clothes of the Emperor.

Let me sum this up : Morality is absolute, it is the catholic religion for us Frenchmen ; well, to be absolutely moral would be to write anew the Fathers of the Church, the Abbé Nicolle, Bossuet, or Bourdaloue. Outside of that task, the mission of literature is to paint society. Religion is to society what the soul is to the body. Our body is immoral, if you look at it as the eternal antagonist of the soul. We can therefore proceed only by contrasts.

My admiration for Rabelais is very great, but it has never coloured the COMÉDIE HUMAINE ; his want of certainty does not please me. He is the greatest genius of France in the middle ages, and the only poet we can oppose to Dante. But that is a little private worship of my own for which I made my *Contes Drolatiques*.

I am known to be an enemy to protestation, or to discussions of literary work, and you are, monsieur, only the second instance of a critic to whom I have made such remarks. The first was a poor young man, full of serious knowledge, who succumbed lately, a republican, who became, as a result of our discussions, a friend to my enterprise. I mean François Pigault, who is much regretted,

and whose biography was written in advance in an article by Victor Hugo. Our arena has its athletes who succumb bearing a great future away with them to their graves. François Pigault was certain to have been one of the most useful minds of our generation. I counted upon him. His death, which I learned in a foreign country, gave me keen pain, and I am sadly happy now to render him this last homage — which we owe to our brother-writers who fall before close of day.

If, over abundantly it may be, I have awakened your fears about construing books, my letter will not have been useless.

I am, with the utmost consideration, monsieur,

Your devoted servant,

H. DE BALZAC.



*Home of Balzac in Rue Fortunée.*







# VIII.

## LITERATURE. BALZAC'S OWN WORKS.

### PREFACES AND NOTES TO FIRST EDITIONS OF SOME OF THE VOLUMES OF THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

"*The Chouans.*" *Scenes of Private life. Scenes of Provincial life.* "*Eugénie Grandet.*" *Remarks in Letters.* "*Lost Illusions.*" *Scenes of Parisian life.* "*Père Goriot.*" *Remarks in Letters.* "*The Lily of the Valley.*" *Remarks in Letters.* "*The Gallery of Antiquities.*"

["THE CHOUANS."]

January 15, 1829.

IN taking the subject of his work from the gravest and most delicate portion of contemporaneous history the author feels the necessity of here stating, with a sort of solemnity, that he has never had any intention of casting contempt or ridicule upon opinions or persons. He respects convictions; and the personages are, for the most part, unknown to him. It is not his fault if the things told speak for themselves, and speak loudly. He has neither created nor revealed them. Here the region is the region, the men are the men, the words are even the words. The facts have never been denied, either in memoirs published at various periods during the Restoration or by the French Republic; the Empire alone buried them in the shadows of the censorship. If it is said that this book would not have seen the light under the reign of Napoleon, surely that is doing honour to the public opinion which has won us liberty.

The author has endeavoured to exhibit one of those events, so sadly instructive to a people, of which the French Revolution has been fruitful.

The continued existence of certain interested persons enjoins upon him the drawing of physiognomies with perfect accuracy, while he confines himself to the permitted ardour of a painter: that of presenting a portrait well, distributing naturally the light and shade, and striving to make the life of his personages living. That expression "perfect accuracy" needs an explanation.

The author does not mean that he contracts an obligation to give the facts one by one, dryly, in a manner that brings history to the condition of a skeleton with all its bones carefully numbered. In our day the great teachings which history unrolls upon its pages ought to be made popular. In accordance with that system, followed of late years by men of talent, the author has endeavoured to put into this book the spirit of an epoch and a deed; preferring discussion to report, drama to narrative, a battle to a bulletin. Therefore none of the events of this national discord, however small, none of the catastrophes which soaked with blood so many fields now peaceful, have been neglected; the actors will see themselves in front or in profile, in shade or in light, and all evils and misfortunes will be found there in action or in motive.

Nevertheless, out of consideration for many persons whose high social position it is useless to indicate, who have miraculously reappeared on the political scene, the author has modified the horrors of a multitude of facts. He had particularly neglected to show the part the clergy took in these disastrous and useless enterprises. This reserve and this consideration came from reading the proceedings of certain revolutionary tribunals in the West, the debates of which, succinct and brief as they are, swarm with legal proofs that it would be odious to take from those records; although, for some families, certain trials would give proofs of devotion and a just claim to glory.

The character given to the last Chouan is both a homage and an offering. It bears witness to that respect for



convictions which has filled the author's mind. If certain scrutinizing persons seek to discover the noble victim who fell in the West beneath republican balls, they must choose among several young noblemen who fell while leading the insurrections of 1799. But though the private qualities of one of those young men, and certain information given to the author by an old man well informed as to events, have served to perfect the character of the last Chouan, he feels bound to acknowledge that the real chief of that movement did not in the least resemble the hero of this book. By thus proclaiming the fictitious parts of the work he hopes to induce the reader to trust the truth of its facts the more.

The political considerations just explained have led the author to put his name to the book, though a legitimate distrust for a first work counsels him to conceal it. From the literary point of view he reflects that there may be, in these days when so many writers make the anonymous a speculation of pride, more real modesty in signing his name.

As for the plot of the book, the author does not give it as new; but it is most deplorably true, — with this difference, that the reality was odious, and that the events which here take several days happened, as a matter of fact, in forty-eight hours. Being ignorant, at the moment of writing, of the fate of several of the actors in his drama, he has disguised the names of all. This precaution, dictated by delicacy, extends to localities.

May this book assist in rendering efficacious the desires formed by all friends of that region for the moral and physical betterment of Brittany! For nearly thirty years civil war has ceased to reign there, but not ignorance. Agriculture, education, commerce, have made no progress for half a century. The misery of the country is worthy of feudal times, and superstition has displaced the morality of Christ. The obstinacy of the Breton nature is one of the greatest obstacles to all generous projects of improvement.

This volume presents one of the aspects of the civil war of the nineteenth century — that of the partisans. Another aspect, that of regular civil war, will be the subject of “The Vendéans” [never written].

[SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE.]

1832.

There are undoubtedly mothers from whom an education exempt from prejudices has taken none of the graces of womanhood, while giving them solid instruction without pedantry. Will such mothers put the lessons contained in these volumes under the eyes of their daughters? The author dares to hope it. He has persuaded himself that sound minds will not blame him for having shown at times a true picture of manners and morals which families in these days bury in shadow, and which an observer has some difficulty in divining. He has reflected that there is less imprudence in marking with a willow branch the dangerous places of life, as sailors mark the shoals of the Loire, than in letting them be ignored by inexperienced eyes.

The author has no reason to solicit absolution from the people of salons. In publishing this work he merely returns to society what society gave him. But can it be that, because he has tried to paint faithfully the events which follow or precede marriage, his work is not allowed in the hands of young girls who are destined to soon appear on the social scene? Is it a crime to raise the curtain of a stage they are about to adorn?

The author has never understood what advantages of education a mother finds in delaying, for a year or two at most, information which necessarily awaits her daughter; why let her be enlightened slowly by the glare of storms to which she has delivered her over almost without defence?

This work has been composed in hatred of the silly books which narrow minds have addressed to women until now. Has the author satisfied the exigencies of the present

day and his own intentions? That is a problem which is not for him to solve. Perhaps the epithet he has applied to his predecessors will return upon himself. He knows that in literature not to succeed is to perish; and it is principally to artists that the public has the right to say :  
VÆ VICTIS !

The author permits himself only one personal observation. He knows that certain minds will blame him for often dwelling long on details apparently superfluous. He knows that it will be easy to accuse him of a sort of puerile garrulity. Often his pictures seem to have all the defects of the composition of the Dutch school of painters without its merits. But the author excuses himself by saying that he meant his book for candid minds, less blasé, less highly instructed, and more indulgent than that of certain critics whose competence he questions.

[SCENES OF PROVINCIAL LIFE.]

1833.

Here we bid adieu to the beauties of youth, to its faults, its precious and naïve hopes; we pass by transition to pictures more serious, to those which, in the author's plan, should express human life seen under the stern aspect given to it by the play of material interests. Here truth will oblige the author to show generous love growing icy under cold and practical reflections. That which in "Scenes of Private life" was pure and noble sentiment is now transformed into grave and often painful passions. Here faults will become crimes. Woman, still young, will continue a sublime child; but as for man, self-interest and calculations will invade his whole life.

The provinces are regions favourable for the portrayal of events which chill the heart and definitely arrest the nature. The "Scenes of Private life" could have no local framing; for is not youth the same wherever it may

be? But here the pictures gain by being seen inclosed in a special world. Moreover, by showing the parallel contrast existing between the life of the provinces and Parisian life the whole work will become more complete. Paris should be the frame of existence as it turns to its decrepitude. In a great city life is never young, unless by chance. In this respect the metropolis of thought has the merit of offering the most complete type of the highest human depravity. The last Scene in Provincial life, "Lost Illusions," is a link which joins the last two ages of life, and presents one of the thousand phenomena by which the capital and the provinces are incessantly wedded.

[*"EUGÉNIE GRANDET."*]

September, 1833.

In the depths of the provinces we meet with many heads worthy of serious study, characters full of originality, existences tranquil on the surface, but secretly torn by tumultuous passions; nevertheless the most salient asperities of such natures, the most passionate of their enthusiasms, end by being blunted in the constant monotony of habits and manners. No poet has yet attempted to depict the phenomena of that life which flows along, growing ever milder. Why not? If there is poesy in the atmosphere of Paris, where a simoon whirls which sweeps away fortunes and crushes hearts, is there none in the slow action of the sirocco of the provincial atmosphere, which unnerves the boldest courage, relaxes the fibres, and blunts the acuteness of passion? If all things rush on in Paris, all things take place in the provinces. There, neither vividness nor saliency, but *there*, dramas in silence; there, mysteries adroitly concealed; there, unravellings of a plot in a single word; there, enormous value given by calculation and analysis to the most indifferent actions.

If literary painters have neglected these admirable scenes of provincial life, it is not from contempt, nor yet for want of observation; perhaps it has been from inability. In fact, to initiate an interest that is almost mute, which lies less in action than in thought; to paint figures, at first sight almost colourless but the details and the half-tones of which demand the most intelligent touches of the brush; to restore to these pictures their gray shadows and their *chiaro-scuro*; to fathom a nature empty apparently, but found on examination to be teeming and rich beneath a dull exterior — does not all this require vast preparations, extreme care, and, for such portraits, the delicacy of antique miniature?

The splendid literature of Paris, economical of its hours, which, to the detriment of art, it employs in hatreds and pleasures, wants its drama ready made; as for seeking for it, it has not the leisure in an epoch when time is not long enough for events. As to creating it, if any author should put forth the intention of so doing, that virile act would excite a riot in a republic where for long it has been forbidden by the criticism of eunuchs to invent a form, a species, or any kind of action.

These observations are necessary to make known the modest intentions of the author, who desires to be only the humblest of copyists, and to establish his right to indulge in the prolixities required by the round of minutiae in which he is here obliged to move. In a period when the glorious name of tale [*conte*] is given to the most ephemeral of works — a name which ought to belong only to the great perennial creations of art — he will surely be pardoned for descending to the meanest grade of history, commonplace history, the recital pure and simple of what is daily to be seen in the provinces.

Later he will bring his grain of sand to the heap raised by the handicrafts of the period; but to-day the poor artist has only caught one of those gossamer threads that

float in the breeze and amuse young girls and children and poets; for which *savants* care nothing at all, although a celestial spinner, they say, lets them fall from her distaff. Take care! there's a *moral* in that rural tradition! And the author here makes it his epigraph. He will show you how, during the fine season of life, certain illusions, spotless hopes, and silver threads come down from heaven and return there without ever touching earth.

[NOTE TO "EUGÉNIE GRANDET."]

October, 1833.

The foregoing conclusion [of the book] necessarily balks curiosity. Perhaps this is so with all true *dénoûments*. Tragedies, or dramas, to speak the language of our day, are rare in nature. Remember the preface. This history is an imperfect rendering of certain pages in the great book of social life which have been neglected by copyists. Here is no invention. The work is a humble miniature, for which more patience was needed than art. Every department has its Grandet; only the Grandet of Mayenne or Lille is less rich than the late mayor of Saumur. The author may have forced a feature, ill-sketched his terrestrial angels, or put a little too much or too little colour on his vellum. Perhaps there is too much gold in the halo of his Maria; the light may not be distributed according to the rules of art; he may have darkened the tints already dark enough of his old man, that wholly material image; but do not refuse your indulgence to the patient monk, alone in his cell, the humble adorer of the *Rosa mundi*, of Mary, beautiful image of the whole sex, the second Eve of Christians.

If the author continues, in spite of the critics, to attribute to womanhood so many perfections, it is because he still thinks, in a young heart, that woman is the most perfect of creations. Issuing last from the Hand that



fashioned the worlds, she must express more purely than all others the thought divine. She is not, like man, taken from the primordial granite and become plastic clay in the fingers of God; no, drawn from the side of man, a supple, ductile matter, she is a transitory creation between man and the angels. Thus you will see her strong as a man is strong, and sensitively intelligent through feeling, like the angels. Was it not necessary to unite in her those two natures in order to bestow upon her the mission of bearing the species in her womb? A child, to her, is it not the whole of humanity?

Among women, Eugénie Grandet will certainly be a type — that of devotions spent among the storms of life and there engulfed, like some noble statue torn from Greece and fallen, on its way to us, into the ocean, where it lies thenceforth, ignored.

[REMARKS IN LETTERS.]

I am correcting “Eugénie Grandet.”

I neither sleep nor rest,  
That child besets me.

If you knew what it is to knead ideas, to give them form and colour, you would not be so nimble with your criticism. So there are too many millions in Eugénie, are there? But, stupid, as the history is true, how can I better truth? You don't know how money grows in the hands of misers. However, if your outcries are just I will verify my figures in the next edition, or I will reduce them. . . .

I can't say anything about your criticisms on “Eugénie Grandet,” except that facts are against you. There is a grocer at Tours who has eight million; M. Eynaud, a mere bagman, has twenty, and did have thirty in gold in his house, till he invested in 1814 on the Grand-Livre at

fifty-six francs, which gives him twenty. Nevertheless, in the next edition I'll lower Grandet's fortune by six millions, and when I am at Frapesle [her country-house] I will reply successively to your criticisms, for which I thank you. Perhaps you will see that the point of view of the author is other than that of the reader. But nothing can ever tell you my gratitude for the motherly care your observations prove to me.

[“LOST ILLUSIONS.” *The first part.*]

1834.

Within three years the author has published the twelve volumes which compose the first three series of the *Études de Mœurs au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*. In concluding this first edition, he must be pardoned for calling attention to the fact that the labour bestowed on the reprinted and on the newly published books was almost equal, because the former have been, for the most part, rewritten; some have been wholly remodelled in subject and in style. It is probable that the three succeeding series — Scenes of Political life, Scenes of Military life, Scenes of Country life — will not require a greater length of time; so that those who take an interest in this enterprise will soon see all its proportions, and comprehend from a glance at its outline the immense amount of details it carries with it.

If the author reiterates the general thought of his work, he is, in a way, constrained to do so by the manner in which it presents itself, — a manner which subjects it to unmerited criticism.

When a writer has undertaken a complete description of society, seen under all its aspects, caught in all its phases, starting from the principle that the social state so adapts men to its needs and so conforms them, that nowhere is one man like to another man; that society creates

as many *species* as professions; and, in short, that social humanity presents as many varieties as zoölogy may not a writer so courageous ask the benefit of a little attention, a little patience? May he not be admitted to the privileges of science, which is allowed, in making its monographs, a lapse of time in proportion to the greatness of its enterprise? Can he not advance, step by step, in his work, without being expected to explain at every step that the new work is a stone of the edifice?

And, after all, are there not great advantages in making known that work in detail, when the whole is so considerable? Each novel is, in fact, only a chapter in the great novel of society. The personages of each history move in a sphere which has no other circumscription but that of society. When one of these personages is left, like M. de Rastignac in "*Père Goriot*," in the middle of his career, he will be found again elsewhere, — in "*Study of a Woman*," "*A Commission in Lunaey*," "*The House of Nucingen*," and lastly in "*The Magic Skin*," — acting in each period according to the rank he has taken, and touching on all events in which men who have risen in value take part. This observation applies to nearly all the personages who figure in this long history of society. The eminent personages of an epoch are not so numerous as might be thought, but there will not be less than a thousand in this work which, at a first estimate, will surely have twenty-five volumes in its descriptive part.

The author acknowledges, with a good grace, that he finds it difficult to know where to stop a book, when, by the manner in which it is published, it is impossible to wind it up to a complete conclusion. This observation is necessarily made in the present volume of "*Lost Illusions*," which contains only a beginning of the whole. The original intention did not go so far; but when it came to execution all was changed, the inexorable divi-

sion into volumes extended everything, but the publisher's speculation could not wait. Consequently, the author was obliged to stop short and publish a volume at the first limit he had himself given to his work.

His first idea was only a comparison between the habits and morals [*mœurs*] of the provinces and those of Paris ; he attacked the illusions that are found, one upon another, in the provinces for want of comparison, — illusions which would produce actual catastrophes if the people of the provinces were not so habituated to their atmosphere and to the mild misfortune of their lives, that they suffer in living elsewhere, and that Paris is, above all, displeasing to them. Speaking for himself, the author has often admired the good faith with which these provincials will put forward a rather silly woman as a wit, and a plain one as a beauty. But, in painting with pleasure the interior of a household and the changes and mutations of a poor provincial printing-press, in giving to that picture the expansion that it has in this work, it is very plain that the field has enlarged, in spite of the author's first intention. When one copies nature, one makes mistakes in good faith. Often in perceiving a site, a locality, one does not divine at first its true dimensions ; a road may seem a wood-path, a dale may prove a valley, a mountain easy to the eye to mount may take a day's climbing. Thus, lost illusions do not wholly concern the young man who thinks himself a great poet, or the woman who encourages that belief and casts him into Paris, poor and without protection.

Moreover the relations that exist between Paris and the provinces, the fatal attractions of that city, showed to the author the young man of the nineteenth century under a novel aspect. He suddenly thought of the great wound of this century — journalism — which devours so many existences, so many noble thoughts, and which produces such frightful reactions in the modest regions of provincial life.

He thought, above all, of the most fatal illusions of this

epoch, of those that families make to themselves about children; who possess, it may be, some gift of genius, but without the will that gives it aim, or the principles that repress its waywardness.

Here again the picture is extended. Instead of one aspect of individual life, the matter now concerns one of the most curious aspects of this period; one that is wearing itself out, as the Empire wore itself out. Consequently, we must hasten to paint it, lest that which is living should become a corpse beneath the very eyes of the painter. The author feels that he has here a great but difficult task. By unveiling the inward manners and morals of journalism he will bring a blush to more than one cheek; but in so doing he may perhaps explain certain inexplicable conclusions of literary lives that once gave the greatest hopes, but came to fatal ends. Besides which, the shameful success of certain mediocre men will be explained at the expense of their protectors, and perhaps, too, of human nature.

When will the author complete his picture? He does not know. But he may complete it. Already this difficulty has presented itself in "Louis Lambert," in the "Hated Son," in the "Hidden Masterpiece;" and each time his patience has not given out, though that of the public has; for the public, to whom these details are perfectly indifferent, wants its books without troubling itself as to the manner in which they are produced.

[SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE.]

1835.

The last study of the preceding Scene, "Lost Illusions," namely, The Two Poets, showed the province coming to seek its fortune in Paris from an impulse of self-love and vanity. In the first study in the Scenes of Parisian life Paris joins with the province, under the auspices of self-

interest. Thus is accomplished day by day, in one sense or another, the constant fusion of the two natures, — the departmental nature and the Parisian nature. Where the second series of the *Études de Mœurs* ended, the second begins; that perpetual transition is therefore faithfully depicted.

But now strange pictures must be unrolled; here the author must arm himself with courage to bear the accusations which will rain upon his work; the most absurd of which will be cast by those who best know the extent of the wounds inflicted by the hydra called Paris. Remember only that the author strives to paint the whole of the nineteenth century; to make, as it were, an inventory of its vices and its virtues. The last of the Scenes of Parisian life will serve as an introduction to the Scenes of Political life, for it forms a natural transition between the picture of the extremes of Paris which are constantly dissolving social principles and the extremes of the Scenes of Political life, in which men will be seen to place themselves above common law in the name of national interests, just as the Parisian does so to the profit of his strong passions and enlarged self-interests.

[“PÈRE GORIOT.”]

1835.

The author of this sketch has never abused the right of speaking of himself that every writer possesses, and in former times used liberally; for no work in the two preceding centuries has appeared without some sort of preface. Those that the writer has hitherto made have been suppressed, and this may be also. Why, then, write it? Here is my answer: —

The work on which the author is toiling will one day recommend itself more, no doubt, by its extent than by the value of its details. It will resemble — to accept the melancholy verdict of a recent critic — a political work of



those barbarous powers which triumphed only through the number of their soldiers. Every one triumphs as he can. There are none but the impotent who never triumph.

He cannot of course expect that the public should at once embrace and divine a plan which he himself has glimpses of only at certain hours,—when day is fading, when he dreams of building his castle in the air, at those moments, in short, when people say to you, “What are you thinking of?” and you answer, “Nothing!” Nor has he ever complained of the injustice of criticism or of the little attention the public has given to judging the various parts of this work, still badly propped, incompletely drawn, and its lines not yet mapped out in any of the mayoralties of Paris. Perhaps he ought himself, with the simplicity of the old authors, to inform subscribers to reading-rooms that such or such book was written and published with such and such intention. The author of *Études de Mœurs* has not done this for several reasons. In the first place: are frequenters of reading-rooms interested in literature? Do they not accept it as a student accepts a cigar? Is it necessary to tell them that humanitarian revolutions are developed in a work, that the writer is a great man unknown, a Homer unachieved, and that he shares with God the fatigue or the pleasure of co-ordinating worlds? Would they believe it? Are not they tired out with limping systems, promises unfulfilled?

Besides, the author does not believe in either the generosity or the attention of a cowardly and thieving epoch, which buys its literature for two sous at the street corner as it buys its matches; which wants its Benvenuto Cellini at a bargain, talent at a “fixed price,” and makes the same war on poets that it does on God by scratching them off the Code, robbing them while they live, and dis-inheriting their families after they are dead. Moreover, for a long time, his sole intention in publishing his books is to obey that second destiny (often the contrary of that

which Heaven awards us) which is forged for us by social events, that which we call *necessity*; which has for its agents men called *creditors*, — precious beings, for the name implies that they, at least, have faith in us. In short, such advertising, apropos of details, seemed to the author mean and useless; mean because it bore on things that ought to be left to criticism; useless, because it would have to disappear when the whole work was completed.

If the author speaks here of his enterprises, he must have met with some strange, unmerited accusation. This accusation will pass away of course; and, in a land where all things pass rapidly away, a preface which never signifies much will soon signify nothing. Nevertheless, he must answer, and he answers thus:—

For some time past the author has been alarmed by meeting in society a superhuman, unhopèd-for number of sincerely virtuous women, happy to be virtuous, virtuous because they are happy, and no doubt happy because they are virtuous. On certain of his idle days he has seen on all sides the fluttering of white wings unfolding, wings of angels making ready to fly in their robes of innocence; all married women moreover, and all reproaching him for the immoderate liking he attributes to woman for the illicit joys of the conjugal crisis which he has named scientifically *minotaurism*. These reproaches were not unaccompanied by flattery, for those women predestined to the joys of heaven acknowledged that they knew, by hearsay, of that most detestable of libels the “Physiology of Marriage,” and they used the above expression to avoid pronouncing a word that is banished from good language — “adultery.” One told him that in his books woman was virtuous only from necessity or by chance; never from choice or pleasure. Another said that the women given to the Minotaur were, as he brought them on the scene, so ravishing that they made the mouth water for sins that ought to be

represented as all that was most displeasing in the world, and there was peril to public morals in making the fate of those women enviable, however unhappy they might be; while on the contrary, she said, those who were attacked by virtue were made extremely unattractive and ungraceful. In short, the reproaches were so numerous that the author is unable to record them all.

Imagine a painter who, thinking that he has made a good likeness of a young woman, receives it back with the assurance that it is horrible! Is it not enough to drive him mad? But that is the way of the world. The world says: "We are white and rosy, and you have given us villanous dark tones; my complexion is pure to those who love me, but you have put in those little moles that no one but my husband would ever see."

The author was shocked by these reproaches. He scarcely knew what to do in presence of this immense number of Rosières, who all deserved the Prix Montyon, but whom he had sent by mistake before the police-court of public opinion. In the first moments of a rout every one thinks only of saving himself; the bravest lose their heads. The author forgot that he had sometimes made, like capricious Nature herself, virtuous women who were fully as attractive as the criminal women. "Père Goriot" was begun in the first quarter of an hour of his despair. To avoid bringing into his fictitious world any more adulteries, it occurred to him to reproduce some of his worst feminine personages in order to remain in a sort of *statu quo* in relation to this serious matter. But having accomplished that respectful act, he feels the necessity of explaining here, by this avowal of his panic, the reappearance of Mesdames de Beauséant; de Restaud, de Langeais, and Lady Brandon.

But should he in this disaster have all the world against him perhaps he may keep on his side that grave and practical personage who is to many authors the world

itself, namely the publisher. This protector of letters appears to count on the vast number of persons to whose ears never reach the titles of books from which these questionable personages are taken, expecting to sell to them freely, — an expectation both bitter and sweet, which the author is forced to take pleasantly.

Certain persons may choose to find in these purely artless remarks a species of prospectus, but everybody knows that one can say nothing in France without incurring blame. Some friends are already blaming, for the author's sake, the levity of this preface, in which he seems not to take his work seriously — as if he were expected to answer gravely ridiculous observations, and arm himself with an axe to kill flies!

But he now formally binds himself to make, after a certain time employed in seeking his model, a woman virtuous by choice. He will represent her married to an unamiable man; for if she were married to an adored man would she not be virtuous from pleasure? He will not make her the mother of a family, because, if, like Juana, (whom the critics thought too virtuous) she has beloved children, she might be virtuous from attachment to her dear angels. He understands his mission, and sees that he must, in accordance with the above promise, paint a virtue of virgin gold minted in the coin of austerity. Also she must be some graceful woman, with imperious senses and a bad husband, pushing charity so far as to call herself happy, but tortured, like that excellent Madame Guyon, whose husband took delight in disturbing her at her prayers in a most inconvenient manner. But alas! in undertaking this work there are many grave questions to solve. If the author propounds them here it is in the hope of obtaining academic notes written by the hand of mistresses in order to compose a portrait with which the feminine public will be satisfied.

In the first place, if this female phenix believes in

paradise, will she not be virtuous by calculation? For, as one of the most extraordinary minds of this great epoch has said, if man sees hell with certainty, how can he fall into it? "Where is the subject who, being in the enjoyment of reason, will not be powerless to oppose the order of his prince who says to him: 'Here you are in my seraglio, in the midst of all my women. Do not approach any one of them for five minutes; I have my eye upon you. If you are faithful for that short time, all these pleasures and others will be granted to you for thirty years of constant prosperity'? Who does not see that this man, however ardent he may be, will not need much strength to resist for so short a time. He has only to believe the word of his prince. Assuredly, the temptations of the Christian are no stronger than that, and the life of a man is much less in presence of eternity than five minutes to thirty years. There is, too, an infinity of distance between the joys promised to the Christian and the pleasures offered to the subject; moreover, while the word of a prince may have some uncertainty about it, that of God has none." (Obermann.)

To be virtuous in that way is it not usury, the laying up of treasure? Consequently, to be sure she is virtuous it is necessary to tempt her. If she is tempted and is virtuous one must, logically, represent her as not having even the idea of the sin; but if she has no idea of the sin, she knows nothing of its pleasures. If she knows nothing of its pleasures her temptation is very incomplete, and she will not have the merit of resistance. How can one desire an unknown thing? Now, to paint her virtuous without being tempted is devoid of sense. Suppose a well-constituted woman, ill-married, tempted, comprehending all the happiness of passion! The work would be difficult, but it can be invented. The true difficulty is not there. Do you believe that in that situation she will not dream often of a sin that the angels ought to pardon? But then,

if she thinks of it, only once or twice, will she be virtuous in committing those crimes of thought in the depths of her heart? Don't you see that while the whole world agrees about the sin, as soon as it becomes a question of virtue it seems almost impossible to understand one another?

The author cannot end these remarks without publishing here the result of a conscientious examination which his critics have forced him to make in relation to the number of virtuous women and criminal women whom he has placed on the literary stage. As soon as his first terror left him time to reflect, his first care was to collect his *corps d'armée*, in order to see if the balance which ought to be found between those two elements of his written world was exact, relatively to the measure of vice and virtue which enters into the composition of our present morals. He found himself rich by thirty-odd virtuous women against twenty-two criminal women, whom he here takes the liberty of ranging in order of battle, in order that the immense results already obtained may not be disputed. To this he adds that he has not counted in a number of virtuous women whom he has left in the shade — where so many of them are in real life.

*Virtuous women.*

*Études de Mœurs.*

Mme. de Fontaine.  
 Mme. de Kergarouet.  
 Mme. Guillaume.  
 Mme. de Sommervieux.  
 Mme. Lebas.  
 Genevra del Piombo.  
 Mme. de Sponde.  
 Mme. de Soulanges.  
 Mme. Claës.  
 Mme. de Solis.  
 Mme. Grandet.  
 Eugénie Grandet.

*Criminal women.*

*Études de Mœurs.*

Duchesse de Carigliano.  
 Mme. d'Aiglemont.  
 Mme. de Beauséant.  
 Lady Brandon.  
 Juliette.  
 Mme. de Merret.  
 Mlle. de Bellefeuille.  
 Mme. de Restaud.  
 Esther.  
 La Marana.  
 Ida Gruget.  
 Mme. de Langeais.



*Virtuous women — continued.*

La Grande Nanon.  
Mme. des Grassins.  
Sophie Gamard.  
Mme. de Listomère.  
Mme. de Granville.  
Adélaïde de Rouville.  
Mme. de Rouville.  
Juana.  
Mme. Firmiani.  
Mlle. Taillifer.  
Mme. Vauquer (doubtful).  
Evelina.  
La Fosseuse.  
Modeste Mignon.

*Études Philosophiques.*

Mme. de Vandière.  
Mme. de Dey.  
Mme. Birotteau.  
Césarine Birotteau.  
Jeanne d'Hérouville.  
Marie d'Hérouville.  
Pauline de Villenoix.  
Mme. de Rochecane.  
Francine.<sup>1</sup>

*Criminal women — continued.*

Euphémie de San-Réal.  
Paquita Valdèz.  
Mme. de Nucingen.  
Mlle. Michonneau.

*Études Philosophiques.*

Pauline de Witznarck.  
Aquilina.  
Mme. de Saint-Vallier.  
Mlle. de Verneuil.  
Mme. du Gua.

Though the author has still some criminals in project, he has also many virtues in press, so that he feels certain of corroborating this result which is flattering to society, for the balance as he now sees it will be thirty-eight to sixty in favour of virtue in the painting he has undertaken of society. If some persons still continue to be misled perhaps their mistake may be attributed to the fact that vice makes the most show; virtue, on the

<sup>1</sup> This list was made in 1835, before many of his greatest works were written. The preponderance of virtuous and good women could be shown to be much greater at the end of his work; balanced, however, by his worst, perhaps the worst woman ever painted — Cousine Bette. — TR.

contrary, presents lines of extreme delicacy to the artist's brush. Virtue is absolute; it is one and indivisible; whereas vice is multiform, multicoloured, undulating, capricious. Besides, when the author shall have painted that chimerical virtuous woman whom he will now seek in all the boudoirs of Europe, justice will be done him, and reproaches will end of their own accord.

Some shrewd critics having remarked that the author paints sinners, as being more lovable than irreproachable women, that fact seems so natural to the author that he can only say it is unfortunately in the masculine nature not to love vice when it is hideous, and to flee from virtue when it is frightful.

Since its republication in book form, "Père Goriot" has become the object of the imperial censure of his Majesty the Newspaper, that autocrat of the nineteenth century, which thrones it over kings, gives them advice, makes and unmakes them, and is expected from time to time to keep a watch on morality since it has suppressed the religion of the State. The author knew it was in the destiny of Père Goriot to suffer during his literary life just as he had suffered in real life. Poor man! his daughters would not recognize him because he was nobody, and the newspapers reject him because he is immoral! Père Goriot has not been sufficiently understood, though the author has taken pains to explain how the old man was in revolt against social laws through ignorance and feeling, just as Vautrin is through his overlooked power and the instinct of his nature. The author has laughed heartily to see some critics, supposed to comprehend what they criticise, requiring that Père Goriot should have a proper sense of propriety, — he! that Sioux of flour, that Huron of the wheat-market! Why not reproach him for not knowing Voltaire and Rousseau, the code of salons, and the French language?

Père Goriot is like the dog of the murderer, which licks the hand of its master when stained with blood; he does not discuss, he does not judge, he loves. Père Goriot would, as he says, black Rastignac's boots to get nearer to his daughter. He wants to take the banks by assault when she lacks money. He loves Rastignac because his daughter loves him. Let every one look around and be frank and say how many Père Goriots in petticoats he sees. The sentiment in Père Goriot includes the maternal sentiment.

But these explanations are almost useless. Those who exclaim against this work would justify it admirably if they had written it. Besides, the author has no deliberate moral or immoral purpose, — to employ the false terms that people make use of. The general plan which binds his books one to another (a plan which one of his friends, M. Félix Davin, has recently explained) obliges him to paint all — Père Goriot as well as the Marana, Bartolommeo di Piombo and the widow Crochard, the Marquis de Legañes and Cambremer, Ferragus and M. de Fontaines — in order to grasp paternity in every fold of its heart, to paint it entire; as indeed he endeavours to represent all human sentiments, social crises, the whole pell-mell of civilization.

If some journals have fallen upon the author others have defended him. Living a solitary life, busy with his labours, he has not been able to thank the latter, to whom he is all the more grateful because they were comrades who had the right of great talents and long friendship to find fault with him. He thanks them here collectively for their useful help.

Persons in love with morality who took quite seriously the promise made by the author in a foregoing preface to portray a completely virtuous woman, may be glad to hear that the portrait is now being varnished, and the frame bronzed; in short, without metaphor, that

difficult work, entitled "The Lily of the Valley" is about to appear.

[FROM LETTERS.]

Gautier sees in "Père Goriot," "Lost Illusions," etc., matter for a great critical and narrative feuilleton. Remark, however, that it is from his point of view, not mine, that he writes. My ideas about myself are very low. . . .

"Père Goriot" is a fine work, but monstrously sad. To make it complete, I had to show the moral sink-hole of Paris, and it has the effect of a disgusting wound. . . .

"Père Goriot" has earned me seven thousand francs; and as it may enter the *Études de Mœurs* before long, I may say that it will give me as much as a thousand ducats. Oh! I am deeply humiliated to be so cruelly bound to the soil of my debts, able to do nothing, to have no free disposition of myself! Bitter tears are shed in silence, day and night—pangs inexpressible, for the strength of my desires would have to be known to understand my regrets. . . .

Here every one, friends and enemies, all agree in saying that "Père Goriot" is superior to anything I have yet done. I myself know nothing about it. It is impossible for me to judge. I am always on the wrong side of my tapestry. But you will tell me your opinion. . . .

I am sorry you did not see the sarcastic preface I put to Goriot; but you shall have it later. . . .

"Père Goriot" is a bewildering success! the bitterest enemies bend the knee. I have triumphed over all; friends as well as the envious. When "Séraphita" shall have spread her glorious wings, when the *Memoirs* of the young married women have shown the inmost lineaments of the human heart, when "The Vendéans" shall have snatched a palm from the romance of Walter Scott, then, then I shall be happy when beside you, for then you will have a friend who is not without some value. . . .

## ["THE LILY OF THE VALLEY."]

1836.

In many fragments of his work the author has produced some personage who relates in his own name. To attain to truth, writers often employ such literary artifices as seem to them most likely to give life to their figures. Thus the desire to animate their creations drove the most illustrious men of the last century into the prolixity of the novel by letters, as the only system which renders a fictitious history apparently real. But the "I" sounds the human heart as deeply as the epistolary style, and is not so prolix. To each work, its own form. The art of the novelist consists in properly materializing his ideas. *Clarissa Harlowe* needed her vast correspondence; *Gil Blas* needs the "I."

But the "I" is not without danger to the author. If the mass of readers has increased, the amount of public intelligence has not grown larger in proportion. In spite of the authority of the "thing judged," many persons are still ridiculous enough to make a writer an accomplice in the sentiments he attributes to his personages; and if he employs the "I" nearly all are inclined to confound that individual with the narrator. "*The Lily of the Valley*" being the most considerable work of those in which the author has used the "I" to steer him through the sinuosities of a history that is more or less true, he thinks it necessary to declare here that he has not put himself in any way whatever on the scene.

He has a stern opinion and fixed principles as to the mixing of personal feelings with fictitious sentiments. To his mind the shameful traffic of prostitution is less infamous than the sale and advertisement of emotions that cannot belong solely to one's own self. The sentiments, good or bad, with which the soul is agitated fill it with I know not what essence that makes it exhale perfumes which thought describes; certainly the style of crushed and suffering beings does not resemble the style of those

whose lives flow on without catastrophes. But between that representation, be it sombre or emotional, worldly or religious, grave or gay, and the prostitution of the dearest treasures of our heart, is a gulf which none but impure souls can cross. If some poet should thus make use of his double life let it be by chance, and not deliberately as in the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The author, who admires the writer in the "Confessions," has a horror of the man. How could Jean-Jacques, so proud of his sentiments, dare to draw up that condemnation of Madame de Warens when he knew so well how to plead for himself? Heap all the crowns of earth upon his head, but the angels will still denounce eternally the rhetorician who could immolate on the altar of fame a woman in whom there were, for him, the heart of a mother and the soul of a mistress, a benefactress beneath the grace of a first love.

[FROM LETTERS.]

The grand figure of a woman that I promised in my preface is half done. It is entitled "The Lily of the Valley." Perhaps I am mistaken, but I think it will cause many tears to be shed; in writing it I have found myself weeping. I mean this work to be the last in the *Études de Mœurs*. At the end of each division of my work will rise a statue of Perfection; represented first upon earth in its details and its completion; and then that Perfection resplendent in the heavens. There, I think, is a great idea which only needs ability and courage to set it forth. . . .

I am preparing a great and beautiful work, "The Lily of the Valley," the figure of a charming woman, full of heart, with a sulky husband, and virtuous. She is to be, in a form purely human, terrestrial perfection, just as "Séraphita" is celestial perfection. . . .

Between now and seven months hence I shall have



accomplished great labours. "César Birotteau" will have followed others that are now on the ways. But the Lily! If the Lily is not the breviary of woman, then I am nothing. Virtue is there sublime, and not wearisome. To be dramatic with virtue, to keep ardent, and use the language and style of Massillon — ah! I tell you it is a problem! a problem which, solved in the first number, has already cost three hundred hours of corrections, four hundred francs to the *Revue*, and to me a trouble in the liver. Dr. Nacquart keeps me in my bath three hours daily on ten pounds of grapes, and wants me not to work. But I sit up all night, nevertheless. Madame de Berny is much better. She told me there was but one thing to say about my Lily — that it was indeed the Lily of the Valley. In her mouth that is great praise, for she is very hard to please.

[“THE GALLERY OF ANTIQUITIES.”]

1839.

In the provinces there are three sorts of superior persons who are constantly tending towards leaving them and going to Paris, which naturally impoverishes by so much provincial society, which can do nothing against this constant drain. Aristocracy, industry, and talent are eternally drawn to Paris, which thus gets into its maw capacities that are born in all parts of the kingdom and adds them to its strange population; draining thus the national intelligence to its own profit. The provinces are the ones originally guilty of this impulsion which robs them. A young man is produced who gives hopes; they cry out to him, “To Paris!” As soon as a merchant makes his fortune, he thinks only of taking it to Paris, which thus becomes the whole of France. This evil does not exist in Italy, nor in England, nor in Germany, nor in the Low-Countries, where ten capital towns offer centres

of different activities, all remarkable by their habits and customs, and special attractions.

This vice, peculiar to our nation, could not escape the author of *Études de Mœurs au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*. "The Gallery of Antiquities" is one of the scenes intended to paint the evils that result from this mania. There lies a principal cause of the facility with which France changes governments and dynasties, and revolutionizes itself to the great detriment of its prosperity. By accumulating thus at one point all superiorities you increase tenfold the conditions of individual greatness, you induce ignoble and desperate contests between startling mediocrities, who gradually sink down, despair, and are lost; whereas if they had stayed elsewhere they might have been great and beneficent. This contest, which ought to weaken individuals and strengthen power, is precisely that which overthrows power. All these pretensions are seeking power, they divide it among them, as it were in advance, and render its exercise impossible. They raise nothing, and pull down all.

"The Gallery of Antiquities" is the history of these poor young men, burdened with a great name, and coming to Paris to be lost there, either through play, through the desire to shine, through the allurements of Parisian life, through an effort to increase their fortunes, or through a happy or an unhappy love. The Comte d'Esgrignon is the counterpart of Rastignac, another type of a young man from the provinces, but adroit and bold, who succeeds where the other fails.

"Lost Illusions," of which the second part is in press and will be published under the title of "A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris" by the same publisher as "The Gallery of Antiquities," will complete the history of these young men of intelligence who come from the provinces to Paris, having, some of them at least, the conditions of talent without having those of success. The

programme of this work has been given in the notice that precedes "Lost Illusions" and need not be repeated here. If the author now mentions it, it is solely to show persons interested in his enterprise the state in which it is and the pains he is taking to complete it. For there are not wanting impatient sympathies which would like to see this work, begun at so many points, rise steadily on equal lines.

Each portion of the *Études de Mœurs* has had the fate of the whole work taken in its entirety, namely: the proportions have overpassed in execution the first intention. These literary estimates are very like the estimates of architects. The natural desire to be a faithful and complete historian has cast the author into an enterprise which needs time and toil that were beyond estimation. "The Gallery of Antiquities" furnishes him with the occasion to reply to certain criticisms which have not been publicly made upon his work.

Many persons, to whom the motive powers of life viewed in its entirety are well-known, declare that things do not happen in detail as the author represents them in his fictions. Those who allow themselves these remarks would, if they were logical, expect to see actors kill themselves on the stage. . . .

As for the assemblage of facts reported by the author they are all true taken singly, even the most romantic. No human head would be powerful enough to invent so great a number of tales; is it not enough to have collected them? In all epochs narrators have been the secretaries of their contemporaries. There is not a tale of Louis XI. or Charles the Bold, not one of Bandiello, of the Queen of Navarre, of Boccaccio, Giraldi, Lasca, not a *fabliau* of the old romancers, that has not a contemporaneous fact for its basis. These thousand caprices of social life are more or less well presented, well enshrined; but as for their truth, that is felt, that projects. There is good in every

species of talent; and the thing is to know how, like Molière, to take your good where you find it. This talent is not common. If all authors have ears, they do not always know how to listen; or, to be more exact, they have not all the same faculties. Nearly all know how to conceive. Which of them does not drive abreast six or seven dramas as he smokes his cigar on the boulevards? Who has not invented the finest comedies? Who, in the seraglio of his imagination, does not possess the noblest subjects? But between these facile conceptions and production there is an abyss of toil, a world of difficulties, which few know how to cross. From that comes the fact that to-day you will find more critics than works, more feuilletons that skim a book than books to be read.

It is as easy to dream a book as it is difficult to make one.

Nearly all the books with entirely fictitious subjects which are not attached, near or far, to some reality are born dead. Whereas those which rest on facts, observed, expanded, and taken from real life, obtain the honours of longevity. That is the secret of the success of "Manon Lescaut," "Corinne," "Adolphe," "René," "Paul and Virginia." Those touching histories are biographical studies, or narratives of events lost in the social ocean and brought to the surface by the harpoon of genius. Walter Scott took pains to show us the living sources from which he drew. Assuredly, after receiving the confidence of the fact which served him in the conception of the "Bride of Lammermoor," he must have found in the circle of his acquaintances a character like that of the Scottish chancellor and a woman like Lady Ashton. He may have invented Ravenswood, but not those characters. Every epic personage is a clothed sentiment, which walks on two legs and bestirs itself; it may issue from the soul. Such personages are, in a certain way, the phantoms of our desires, the realization of our hopes; they bring out admirably the

truth of the real characters copied by the author; they relieve their commonplaceness. Without these precautions there would be neither art nor literature. Instead of composing a tale it would be sufficient, in obedience to certain critics, to make one's self the stenographer to all the civil and police courts of France. You would then have the real in all its purity; a horrible history that you would abandon before you got to the end of your first volume. You can read fragments of it every day between advertisements for ignoble diseases and laudatory articles on books to be pushed, side by side with a thousand industries born and dying according to the debates in the Chambers. You could never bear that reading long.

If this explanation, useful to some minds, useless to the majority, does not cast a certain light on the manner in which the author is composing a work so immense as the collection of all social facts, he will feel the more dispensed from giving these explanations and prefaces, which will disappear altogether when the Book is ended and shows for what it is in its true and completed form.

## IX.

## LITERATURE. BALZAC'S OWN WORKS.

"Bureaucracy," "Nucingen and Co.," "Esther." "A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris." "Lost Illusions." "David Séchard." *Remarks in Letters.* *Lucien de Rubempré.* "Splendours and Miseries of Courtiers." "Pierrette." "The Village Rector." "The Country Doctor." *Letters concerning it.*

[*"BUREAUCRACY," "NUCINGEN AND CO.," "ESTHER."*]

1838.

THESE are three fragments which will, later, be found in their place in the *Études de Mœurs*. Here the author owns with a good grace one of the thousand little miseries of his literary life, which is, beyond question, the only point he can have in common with one of the noblest geniuses of modern times, Walter Scott, on whose authority he now bases his own defence. If this anomaly of publication is open to criticism, the illustrious Scotchman would be without excuse, whereas the poor French author presents himself with a touching accompaniment of attenuating circumstances before the areopagus so amusingly personified by the ingenious Scotchman in his prefaces as Captain Clutterbuck, Doctor Dryasdust, and other charming myths, to whom he renders his accounts, hidden beneath pseudonyms — other figures not less charming. Before the disaster which poisoned his latter days Sir Walter Scott lived as a feudal lord in his castle of Abbotsford, surrounded by a magnificence worthy of his literary royalty, and endowed with a civil list of three hundred thousand francs. He wrote, at his ease and as he pleased, one work in six months without other obligations than those he was under to fame. In such a situa-



tion a writer is expected to publish only completed works. The French author has, alas! an uncivil list and many obligations to meet; consequently, the differences that exist between him and that great genius in the spiritual order are not less extensive in the physical order.

Walter Scott might have avoided this assumed defect, which he defined himself when replying to critics eager to convert his brilliant qualities into vices, — eternal manœuvre of literary calumny. This vice consisted in not following his original plans, constructed with the depth that characterizes the Scotch nature, the structure of which became broken under the developments which he gave to the characters of certain personages. In working from the glowing sketch which all literary painters design upon the canvas of their brain, he saw emerging larger, as in a stereopticon, a figure so attractive, existences so magnificent, a character so new, that instead of leaving them in minor places he let them expand and develop grandly in his work. That fickle goddess Fancy invited him so persuasively with a touch of her rosy fingers, and a smile so fascinating, she made herself so coquettish in *Fenella*, so profound in the *Laird o' Dumbiedikes*, so varied in the neighbourhood of *Saint Ronan's Well* that he — child as naive as the man was great — let himself go and followed her into all the dark corners it pleased her to illuminate. This great genius, the dupe of his own poesy, explored and ferreted with the goddess; he turned over all the stones in the road beneath which lay the souls of licentiates; he let himself be led to the sea-shore to see a marsh; he listened to the delightful chatter of that fairy and reproduced it in leafy arabesques profoundly pondered, long prepared, his glory to the eyes of connoisseurs, though wearisome to superficial minds, in which each detail is so essential that the personages, the events, would be incomprehensible if a single one of them were omitted.

See how he dashes the jesting personages of his preface on the critics! Like splendid hunting-dogs they rush at their quarry and, with a single snap of the jaws, bite the said aristarchs to the bone. These ingenious prefaces, without gall yet *malicieux*,<sup>1</sup> ironical with good nature, in which reason shines, resplendent as Molière could make it, these prefaces are masterpieces to studious minds which have preserved the taste for atticism. Sir Walter Scott, a rich man, a Scotchman with ample leisure, having a whole horizon blue before him, might, if he had thought proper, have ripened his plans and composed his work in a manner to insert with regularity all the beautiful precious stones he had found on his way. But he thought that all did well *as he produced them*; and he was right.

If the poor French author had the presumption to think so, he would be very wrong; he is not, as already explained, either mentally or physically in the conditions where the gifts of genius, of fortune, and of Scottish wiliness (innocent wiliness) had placed Sir Walter Scott. In the first place, he belongs to a country which gives itself the least possible trouble; he has no castle of Abbotsford, or splendid furniture, or domains, or packs of hounds. He works out of his own being, just as he came out of his province to make himself a quasi-Parisian. Moreover, he had the imprudence to appear in the arena with visor raised, without armour, head and breast bare; conduct as foolish as it was fine, as generous as it was imprudent; he has no pack of hounds, therefore, to let fly at his critics and give them a coursing match. Instead of being the huntsman, he is the game. Instead of living in peace under the domino which the lion of the North so ingeniously put on (which permitted the masked Scotchman to say his say to every one), he

<sup>1</sup> A word that has no representative in the English language; more's the pity. — TR.

stands like Nero's Christian in the centre of the circus, hearing his efforts laughed at, his method of fighting ridiculed, and receiving point-blank, volleys that nearly kill him. One critic, however, has forgotten to load his gun with a cartridge, and discharges only salt at the author; another puts in his buck-shot before the powder and the author is saved; a third takes long aim and misses; a fourth has a wooden gun; in short, he has had the surprising luck to have received no mortal wound as yet. . . .

However, it is not entirely useless to explain that the author, having little leisure, is, for reasons other than those of the great Scotchman, subject to the same defect of knowing better than his critics or his readers where he is going when he composes a book. If he abandons his original ideas for ideas that have sprung up after his primitive plan was formed, it is no doubt that he finds them more satisfactory — to himself, be it understood: perhaps the handiwork is less costly; the personages may need less stuff in their clothes, the colours are perhaps of a less expensive kind. There are, don't you see? a variety of small considerations, which those who complain the most and who take the most pleasure in stirring up the public against the manufacturer, understand very well.

But who knows? Chance is a good workman; he may take upon himself to answer these murderous outcries. Later, perhaps, all these fragments will be seen to make a mosaic; only, it is very certain that it will not have the golden background of those of San Marco, nor the marble ground of those of antiquity, nor that of the precious stones of Florence: it will be of common potter's clay, of baked earth, such as certain village churches in Italy are built of; it may show more patience than talent, an honest indigence in material, and parsimony in the means of execution. But — like as in those village churches —

the building will have a portal where a thousand full-length figures have been carved; it will show profiles in their frames; madonnas will issue from their niches to smile at the passer; true, they will not be the virgins of Raffaele, of Correggio, of Leonardo, of Andrea del Sarto; but madonnas of the people, such as artists, poor in everything, have painted on the walls and by the waysides of Italy.

In such a builder a sort of good-will must be recognized — he has tried to imitate some great thing, to carve a cornice, to floriate a capital, to erect columns, lengthen a nave, and raise altars to figures of saintly suffering. He will also have tried to perch demons on his gargoyles, and to hang some coarse and grinning physiognomies between two supports. He will have scattered, here and there, a few angels found in the shops of pasteboard statuary. Marble is so dear! he has had to do as the poor do. What the devil! is n't the author of his epoch? and it is not the age of Leo the Tenth — just as he himself is a poor Tourangian and not a rich Scotchman.

All these things hang together. A man without a civil list is not expected to give you books like those of a literary king. The critics say, and the world repeats, that money has nothing to do with all this. Go and tell that to the Chamber of deputies; tell them that money is of no consequence in completing a public building, and see how the workmen's benches of the arrondissement will rise as one man and clamour furiously! Rubens, Van Dyke, Raffaele, Titian, Voltaire, Aristotle, Montesquieu, Newton, Cuvier, were they able to make their works monumental without the resources of princely existence? Has not Jean-Jacques owned that the "Social Contract" was one stone of a great building he was forced to renounce? We have now but the parings of a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, killed by grief and poverty. The Géricaults, who might have been great painters, the

writers of synthesis who could hold their own with the geniuses of times past, die if they do not meet with some pecuniary luck indispensable to their thoughts and their paintings. So, without having other resemblance to these glorious Unknown than that of the mystery of their painful lives, the author declares that there are many chances for leaving things begun and never finished — as we may see in Florence, Pavia, France, everywhere.

Though people may not think it, this answer to criticism, drawn from the total absence of a budget accruing to the works of the author, this answer so sorrowful, so coarse, so disgusting if you like, is derived from one of the most important questions of our present political state. It puts in evidence the necessity that the majority of French writers are under to live by the product of their work; and, as for what concerns himself, the author of these fragments owns that they must learn to live on very little. . . .

Certainly for great men born poor, life has but two faces: either mendicity, like Homer, Cervantes, and others, the indifference of La Fontaine, Macchiavelli, and Spinoza, the cynicism (which is the same system) of Jean-Jacques; or else the settled determination of the Calderons, the Lope de Vegas, Diderot, Raynal, Mirabeau, Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and *tutti quanti* to sell their poems in the market.

Let the author say it boldly, great writers ought to be the pensioners of their country. In all epochs, enlightened kings, or those who were fortunate in their selections, and great seigneurs, in fact all the highest intelligence of any century represented by men in great positions has always put men of genius in a position to produce their works without constraint or anxiety. There are noble examples of this equality granted to talent — as there were also mean spirits to be met with who wanted that protectorate cheaply; jealous hearts that

sheltered their revenge under the mantle of a poor beneficence. Cervantes and the Duke de Lerma, Corneille and the controllers of finance who left him to want, are proofs of this. Madame de la Sablière and Madame de Herbart, those two sisters of charity who took care of La Fontaine, whose glory they share, are not common. But Philip II., that terrible king, granted exemption to artists from all civic, patriotic, and financial duties and taxes; there is some distance from his decree to the tortures inflicted by the National guard of Paris on certain distinguished writers, and to the hundred thousand crowns lately voted by the Chamber of deputies to encourage — now listen! —

ARTS! SCIENCES! LETTERS!

François I. sent Raffaele one hundred thousand crowns in a golden basin, without asking any return for it; but the painter replied by the "Transfiguration," one of the few pictures painted wholly by himself. . . .

French literature is now impoverished; it is threatened with death by piracy, which robs the writer of the fruit of his vigils. If books are still published in France, which owes its noblest conquests to its language and its higher literature, it is because a ream of paper, two goose-quills, and a pot of ink are still worth from five hundred to a thousand francs, out of which pittance an author can buy bread.

This is not a digression: it is a practical literary explanation.

[“A GREAT MAN OF THE PROVINCES IN PARIS.”]

1839.

“A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris” is the continuation of “Lost Illusions,” which formed the introduction to this Scene, probably the longest of all those which will compose the *Études de Mœurs*. The author once



more regrets to announce that the picture is not finished. The departure of the hero from the provinces and his stay in Paris are, as it were, two parts of a trilogy, which will be completed by his return to the provinces.

Has the author fulfilled the promises given in his introduction to "Lost Illusions"? The reader must judge. Journalists could not, any more than other professions, escape the jurisdiction of a comedy of human society. For them, perhaps, a new Aristophanes was needed, and not the pen of a writer little given to satire; but they inspire such fear in literature that neither the stage, nor poets, novelists, nor comic versifiers have ever dared to drag them before a tribunal where ridicule *castigat ridendo mores*. Once only M. Scribe essayed the task, in his little play called "Charlatanism," which was really less a scene than a portrait. The pleasure given by that clever sketch made the writer conceive of the merit of a broader picture. At another time, M. de Latouche approached the question of literary morals; but he attacked journalism itself less than one of the coalitions for the benefit of a system the duration of which depends on the obscurity of enrolled talents — for once celebrated, the confederates can no longer agree; well disciplined during the contest, the Pegasi all quarrel at the manger of fame. Consequently, the author now has the merit of an action which is the more courageous because it alarms more people.

How is it that in times when every one is looking about him for new subjects no pen has ventured to exercise itself on the horribly comic morals of the press, the only originals of our period?<sup>1</sup> The author would, however, fail in justice if he forgot to mention the magnificent

<sup>1</sup> This was written before the "Monograph of the Parisian Press." It was the publication of "A Great Man in the Provinces" that caused the virulent attacks on Balzac which led him to write the "Monograph." — TR.

preface to a magnificent book, "*Mademoiselle de Maupin*," where M. Théophile Gautier has entered, whip in hand, booted and spurred like Louis XIV. at his famous *lit de justice*, into the very heart of journalism. That work of comic vigor, or let us say more truly, that act of courage has proved the danger of the enterprise. The book, one of the most artistic, vernal, sparkling, and vigorous compositions of our day, of a charm so alluring, a style so contrary to the commonplaceness of other books, has it had its due success? has it been sufficiently noticed? has justice been done to it? . . .

Since the period from which is taken the present Scene the evils that the author has striven to paint have been aggravated. Formerly journalism imposed a tax in kind on the publisher; it required of him a certain number of copies, not less than one hundred in addition to payment for articles which the publisher is always seeking, and not always seeing appear. But in these days this double tax is still further increased by the exorbitant charge for advertisements, which cost as much as the manufacturing of the book. Now, as nothing is changed in the financial habits of certain critics, there are one or two, not more, who may be partial or bitter, but are disinterested. It follows that criticism in the newspapers is injurious to modern literature. Do you suppose that some noble minds and many indignant souls have not applauded M. Gautier's preface? But for all that, has the public in general honoured and applauded the comic verse in which this poet has depicted the profound corruption, the immorality of these sycophants, who themselves complain of the corruption, the immorality of the government? What a frightful thing is the lukewarmness of right-minded persons!

The customs and morals of the newspaper constitute one of those vast subjects which need more than one book or one preface. Here the author has described the be-

ginnings of the disease which has now reached its full development. In 1821 the newspaper still wore its robe of innocence compared with what it is in 1839. If the author has been unable to probe the wound to its full extent, he has, at any rate, touched it without terror. He has used the privileges of his position. He belongs to the very small number of those who have no thanks to give to journalism. He has never asked anything of it; he has made his way without leaning on that contaminated stick. One of his advantages is that he has so steadily despised that hypocritical tyranny that he has never asked for an article from any pen, and never sacrificed on any altar to build a pedestal for works which, in the times we live in, may not last a month. He has the right, dearly bought, to look in the face of this cancer, which is eating away, it may be, the whole country.

*Apropos* of this, many will probably say that the author pretends wounds in order to attract interest, and that as for himself all is sweetness and serenity. As for that, only yesterday calumny and defamation against him were such that the correctional police, before whom one of his publishers brought a newspaper article which attacked a business operation useful to contemporaneous literature—an effort of French publishers to resist Belgian piracy—used all the vigour of the law against the newspaper. However, the author's publishers can prove the existence of four editions of "The Country Doctor," a book which did not receive a single approving word in any paper, no matter which; while a second edition is still delayed of "Eugénie Grandet," that one of his works which the critics have loaded with exaggerated praise in order to smother the rest.

Let it not be thought, however, that passion, a desire for vengeance, or any unworthy sentiment has inspired him to the execution of the present work. He had the right to make portraits and he has kept to generalities.

Journalism plays so great a rôle in the history of contemporaneous manners and morals that he would, later, be accused of pusillanimity if he omitted this Scene in the great drama that is being played in France.

To many readers this picture may seem overcharged. They ought therefore to be told that all is a dreadful reality, which has been softened in this book, the bearing of the book being, moreover, restrained by the nature of the subject. The whole question here relates to the depraving influence of journalism on young and poetic souls, and the difficulties which await beginners and lie more in the moral realm than in the material. Not only does the journal kill much youth and many talents, but it knows how to bury its dead in profound silence; it lays no flowers on their graves; it sheds no tears over its deceased assistants. Let us say it again! this subject is co-extensive with the epoch itself. The Turcaret of Lesage, the Philinte and Tartuffe of Molière, the Figaro of Beaumarchais, and the Scapin of the old stage — all those types are magnified by the greater proportions of our century, in which the sovereign is everywhere, except on the throne — a century where every one negotiates in his own name and tries to make himself the central point of a circumference, or king in a dark corner.

What a fine picture would be that of these mediocre men, fattened on treachery, fed with the brains they suck, ungrateful to their victims, replying with hideous jests to the sufferings they have caused, safe from all attack behind their ramparts of mud, and always ready to throw a bone to some cur whose jaws seem armed with sufficient canines, and whose voice can bark in proportion! The author has had to neglect many of the details, and throw aside many personages; otherwise the work would have gone beyond all bounds; and besides, his position commanded him to avoid personalities. But this book, if it hinders only one young poet, one fine soul living in the

depths of the provinces, in the heart of a beloved family, from coming to increase the number of lost souls in the Parisian hell, poor souls who fight with ink, cast their abortive books at the heads of their fellows, and snatch a scythe to vie with one another in mowing down the fairest flowers, this book will have done a good action. Is not this something for a book to do in these days when books are born, live, and die like the insects of Hypannis, whose morals may have furnished the first of all newspaper articles to some Greek, I know not whom?

Will this work allow any of the illusions of provincials to remain? The author thinks it may; youth has youth against itself; provincial talent has provincial life against it, and the monotony of that makes every man of imagination aspire to the dangers of Parisian life. Paris to them is like a battle to soldiers; they all expect in the morning to be alive at night; it is not till the next day that the dead are counted. The Luciens are like smokers who persist, against all warnings, in lighting their pipes in mephitic mines. Abysses have their magnetism. Well, youth may at least learn here in this book that firmness and rectitude are even more necessary than talent to win a pure and noble fame.

[“LOST ILLUSIONS.” “DAVID SÉCHARD.”]

1844.

This work is a third part of “Lost Illusions;” the first appeared under that title, the second is called “A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris;” this last part ends the rather long work in which provincial life and Parisian life contrast with each other. It is intended that this book shall be the last scene in the “Scenes from Provincial life.”

There are three causes, perpetually in action, which unite the provinces to Paris: the ambition of the noble,

the ambition of the enriched merchant, the ambition of the poet. Mind, money, and a great name come in search of a sphere which they think belongs to them. "The Gallery of Antiquities" and "Lost Illusions" show the history of the ambition of the young noble and the young poet. There remains to be written the history of the enriched bourgeois who has come to dislike his province and does not wish to live longer among the witnesses of his early beginnings, and who hopes to be a personage in Paris. As for the political movement, — the ambition of the deputy, — that is a scene which belongs to Political life. It is nearly finished, and is called "The Deputy of Arcis."

The picture of the provincial bourgeois in his narrow sphere once drawn, little will be wanting to make the Scenes of Provincial life complete; henceforth it will be easy to see the spaces to fill. First, the painting of a frontier garrison town; next, a seaport; then, a town where the theatre is a cause of disorder and where actors and actresses come for a harvest; and, finally, the provinces would not be fairly completed if the author did not show the effect produced there by Parisian innovators who settle themselves in the provinces with a scheme for doing good.

These four or five scenes are only details; but they will enable the author to paint-in certain typical figures hitherto forgotten.

In this long enterprise even one forgetfulness compromises the work already done. If, in striving to copy the whole of society and reproduce it, the author were to neglect any detail, he would then be blamed for using others. Certain critics would say to him: "You have a predilection for immoral persons or for scandalous scenes, inasmuch as you present to us such and such a figure, forgetting the contrast which a pure and beneficent portrait would produce on the soul."



This reproach cannot be made to "Lost Illusions," for the life of David Séchard and his wife in the depths of their province is a violent opposition to Parisian life and morals.

Immense literary efforts were needed to succeed in framing the literary movement of Parisian life in two pictures of provincial life. But perhaps the social interest within it will be so powerful that the reader will see, at least the author hopes so, how experience comes into life. The soldering together of provincial life and Parisian life was the place where this great lesson should be shown.

It is from the complete whole of this work (up to the present time the longest in the *Études de Mœurs*) that his precepts and his moral most vividly appear. Therefore it cannot be perfectly judged until it is read as a whole where it stands in the COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

There is in the contrasting of the character of Rastignac, who succeeds, with that of Lucien, who fails, the picture on a broad scale of a notable fact in the present day; the ambition which succeeds, the ambition which fails; early ambition, ambition as it starts in life.

Paris is like an enchanted fortress, for the assault of which the whole youth of the provinces makes ready; therefore, in this history of our manners and customs in action the personages of the young Vicomte de Portenduère (in "Ursula"), the young Comte d'Esgrignon, and that of Lucien, are necessary parallels to those of Émile Blondet, Rastignac, Lousteau, d'Arthèz, Bianchon, etc. In the comparison of means, wills, and successes, lies the tragic history of youth up to the age of thirty. The author has never ceased to say that, in relation to the moral question, it was better shown in the part than in the whole, in the single figure than in the group.

In David Séchard we find a profound melancholy. Athanase Granson (in "The Old Maid") chose death; he

could not resign himself; David Séchard, beloved by a woman of simple, lofty character, accepts the calm, pure life of the provinces and relinquishes the sceptre of his hopes, his fortunes. The author has hesitated to show him, ten years after his abdication, feeling a regret in the midst of his happiness. Intelligent persons must complete that figure in their thoughts; some would see ingratitude to Ève his wife. In the comparison of these two figures with others of the Scenes of Provincial life there is an argument for the Family — which is, in fact, the general meaning of “Lost Illusions.”

There are none but choice spirits, beings of herculean strength, to whom it is safely permitted to leave the protecting roof of the family to enter the struggle of life in the vast arena of Paris.

[REMARKS IN LETTERS.]

Do not be troubled, I beg of you, about the reviews; it would even be vexatious if they were otherwise. A man is lost in France the moment he makes a name and is crowned in his lifetime. Insults, calumnies, contradictions — they all suit me. Some day it will be known that if I have lived by my pen there have never entered two sous into my purse that were not hardly and laboriously earned; that to praise or blame I have been very indifferent; that I have built up my work amid shouts of hatred, literary volleys, and that I have gone about it with a firm hand, imperturbably. My vengeance is to write in the *Débats* “The Lesser Bourgeoisie;” it is to make my enemies say angrily: “At the moment we thought he had emptied his bag, he puts forth a masterpiece.” That is what M<sup>me</sup>. Reybaud said on reading “David Séchard.” You will read the strange history of Esther; I will send it to you carefully corrected. You will see there a Parisian world which is, and ever will

be, unknown to you; very different from the false Paris of "Les Mystères," in which the author, as George Sand says, applies the whip which lashes every compress off the wounds that he discovers. You write me: "What a volume that is which contains 'Nueingen,' 'Pierre Gras-sou,' and 'The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan!'" Perhaps you are right; I am proud of them (between ourselves). But read "Lucien."

You will see whether the corruption of the Spanish abbé, which displeased you, was not necessary to carry on the work of Lucien in Paris, ending, at last, in an awful suicide. Besides his own history, Lucien has served as an easel on which to paint journalism. He has served also to paint the piteous and pitiable class of kept women, — corruption of the flesh after the corruption of the mind.

Next comes "The Lesser Bourgeoisie," and for conclusion, "The Brotherhood of Consolation." Nothing will then be lacking in my Paris but the artists, the theatres, and the savants! I shall then have painted the great modern monster under all its aspects. . . .

In "Lost Illusions" I have made a young girl, named Ève, who, to my eyes, is the most delightful creation that I have ever made.

[*"LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ."* *"SPLENDOURS AND MISERIES OF COURTESANS."*]

The flattening, the effacing of our morals goes on increasing. It is ten years since the author of this book wrote that there was nothing now but degrees; and now the degrees are disappearing. Indeed, according to the very witty saying of the author of "Louison d'Arquiem," there are no longer either defined morals or comedy except among thieves, prostitutes, and galley-slaves. There is no longer energy, except in beings who are outlawed

from society. Present literature lacks contrasts; no contrasts are possible without distances; and distances are being daily suppressed. To-day the carriage is coming down to the level of the pedestrian, and the pedestrian will soon be spattering the rich man in his low vehicle. The black coat triumphs. What there is in coats and wheels now inspires all minds equally, and lives in manners, and morals too. A minister gets on very well with the king on a small fortune. Hackney-coaches can be seen in the courtyard of the Tuileries. The embroidered coat of a minister, general, or member of the Institute—in a word, costume is ashamed to show itself and looks like masquerading. Yet we have many grounds against our epoch, and as the vice we are now attacking is frightfully hypocritical, it goes without saying that we are becoming immoral.

It seems to the author very necessary to say this at the beginning of a book in which are painted, in all their truth, the lives of spies, kept prostitutes, and persons at war with society who swarm in Paris.

To do the Scenes of Parisian life and omit these singular figures would have been an act of cowardice of which he is incapable. Besides, no one has ever yet dared to approach the comic side of these existences; the censor will not allow it on the stage, and yet Turcaret, and Madame la Ressource belong to all time.

To complete the Scenes of Parisian life the author still has to do the Palais de Justice, the theatrical world, and the world of the savants.

That done, not much will have been forgotten, for the author is now preparing, as a counterpoise and opposing picture, a work in which will be seen the action of virtue, religion, and beneficence in the heart of this vast corruption of capitals; and it is a work so long and so difficult that he has now toiled at it three years without being able to bring it to a conclusion. This work, "The Brother-

hood of Consolation," or "The *Other Side* of Contemporary History," lofty in virtue, shows also the frightful misery on which Parisian civilization rests.

In beginning the Scenes of Parisian life with the "History of the Thirteen" the author determined within himself to end them with the same idea, namely: that of association made for purposes of charity, just as the first was made for purposes of pleasure.

We can never penetrate the social body dogmatically, after the fashion of a treatise of d'Alembert on Taste. We must go into the prisons, into the depths of law and lawlessness, led by a criminal, just as we are here led by a banker into the midst of the intrigues of the exceptional life of lorettes.

This novel, composed of details absolutely true, not to say historical, taken, in short, from private life, stops short on the threshold of Force, in the office of an examining judge. It must therefore have a continuation. The judicial world with its many figures holds too great a place in Paris not to be scrupulously studied, depicted, and reproduced. In this way, and before long, the great and stupendous figure of Paris in the nineteenth century will be finished, I hope; not one of its peculiarities shall be omitted; Corentin, Peyrade, and Contenson will represent *spying* under its three aspects, just as Vautrin is, in himself alone, the image of all corruption and all immorality.

Many men have had the weakness to blame the author for the figure of Vautrin. Surely it is not too much to put one man of the galleys in a work which assumes to daguerreotype a society in which there are fifty thousand, whose existences, always dangerous, will attract, sooner or later, the attention of the legislator. A few pens, actuated by false philanthropy have, for the last dozen years, made the galley-slave an interesting being, excusable, the victim of society. But to our mind such pic-

turings are dangerous and anti-political. Such beings should be presented as what they are, beings *outside of the law*. Such was the intention, little understood, of the play called "Vautrin," in which that personage proved his social impossibility by exhibiting the dramatic combat of the police and a robber, perpetually at war.

Perhaps justice will be done to the author some day when readers see with what care he has put upon the scene the figures, always singular, of the courtesan, the criminal, and their surroundings; with what patience he has sought out the comic; with what truth he has found the noble side of those natures, with what bonds he has attached them to the general study of the human heart. Certainly Baron de Nucingen is the modern G ron te, the old man of Moli re, ridiculed, duped, foiled, content, despised, in the clothes and with the means of our day. This book, therefore, offers one of the thousand faces of the great city. It enters the COM DIE HUMAINE side by side with "The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan" and "The House of Nucingen." Perhaps Esther may be found to have grandeur in the vicinity of the cold and elegant corruption of the princess and the monstrosities of upper banking. Unless the reader refuses to take account of the author's aims and means, which (to sum them up) are to analyze and criticise society in all its aspects, he cannot deny him the courage of going to the bottom of all questions, and of examining them under every aspect. In this consists, to the writer's mind, the philosophy of a work; as to the final judgment of his meaning and morality, he can wait for it.

If the author wrote to-day for to-morrow, it would be the very worst of calculations; for if he wanted immediate, productive success, he would only have to obey the ideas of the moment and flatter them as some writers do. But he knows better than his critics the conditions



through which a work obtains duration in France: it must be true, it must have good sense, and a philosophy in harmony with the eternal principles of the social state. But these conditions cannot be acquired from parts and details of the work; they will come from the whole only. Until then, superficial people have the right to find fault. One must grant something to the modern god — the *majority*; that colossus with clay feet and a very hard head, not of gold, indeed, but alloy.

[“PIERRETTE.”]

1838.

The state of celibacy is a state contrary to society. The Convention had the idea for a moment of subjecting celibates to a taxation double that of married men. In that, it conceived the most equitable of its fiscal notions and the easiest to execute. Just see what the Treasury would have gained from a little amendment thus worded:—

*Direct taxation of every kind shall be doubled when the citizen is not and has not been married.*

If there exists in France a million of celibates paying taxes at an average of ten francs a head, the budget of receipts will be increased by ten millions of francs.

And marriageable young girls will never cease to laugh as they think of these doubled dues, and of their own, not doubled yet.

And married men will roar with laughter.

And the Genoese and English school, which likes to preach to us, will draw in its thin lips over its yellow teeth.

And the tax-gatherers will grin as they write their little squares of paper, blue, yellow, gray, greenish, or red, which are always paid *with costs*.

There will be universal laughter.

The publication of this idea, developed from the

archives of the Convention, is all the more courageous because he who puts it forth is a bachelor; but there are cases where social interests ought surely to rise above personal interests.

This concerns a principle. And that principle is the profound hatred the author feels to all unproductive beings, to celibates, old maids and old bachelors, those drones of the hive.

So, in this long and complete picture of the manners, morals, figures, actions, and movements of modern society he resolved to pursue the celibate, guarding always the noble and generous exceptions, the priest, the soldier, and some rare devotions.

The first work in which he busied himself with this class of vertebræ was wrongly entitled "The Celibates;" it will henceforth be called "The Vicar of Tours." In it he put four different figures which showed fairly well the vices and virtues of celibacy; but that was only an indication. "Pierrette" continues the painting of the celibate, rich treasure of a figure which has offered the author more than one model: the Chevalier de Valois, in "The Old Maid," the Chevalier d'Espard, a mute, half-hidden figure, in "A Commission of Lunacy," de Marsay, and Chesnil, that old and devoted notary. Poirer and Mademoiselle Michonneau are only, up to this time, incidental; they have not been leading figures, types bearing on their foreheads a social or philosophical meaning. . . .

So, if a variety of celibates have already been encountered in the *Études de Mœurs*, let it be set down to that necessity we all obey of being twenty years old; but as for celibates who are seriously celibates, robbing civilization and giving nothing back to it, the author has the deliberate intention of blasting them, pinning them on sheets under glass in a compartment of his museum, as we do curios and singular insects. "Pierrette" is due

to this scheme of social, political, religious, and literary denunciation.

But do not accuse the author of a settled intention to snap at people like a mad dog; he is not a celibatophobe. One of the most envious and ridiculous absurdities of which he is the butt is to make it believed he has absolute ideas, persistent, indivisible hatreds against certain classes in society, such as notaries, merchants, usurers, burghers, journalists, bankers.

In the first place, he loves those persons as the Marquis de Valenciana ought to cherish the beloved acres from which he draws annually his ingots of gold.

And then, in all honour and conscience he declares that when the design of the fresco in which so many personages are moving about is finished, and you see it as a whole, you will be surprised at the quantity of silly things, false judgments, baked and sometimes raw apples that have been flung at the author while his brush has been covering the wall as he stood on his scaffolding (very insecure) and painted, painted, painted.

Then you will see that if he was forced to paint miserly ninnies like the Rogrons, he also made the portrait of Pillerault; if he sketched a Claparon he put beside him Gaudissart and that little Popinot (now mayor of an arrondissement, chevalier of the Legion of honour, and standing very well with the throne — surrounded at the present time by citizen institutions). The Marquis d'Espard, in "A Commission of Lunacy," does he not compensate for du Tillet? César Birotteau, does not he contrast with the Baron de Nucingen?

But the author does not wish to repeat himself in his prefaces, any more than in his work. It is now six years since, in a preface to "Père Goriot," he denied the false, inimical, illegal, foolish, and indelicate accusations against the feminine population of his works, and gave a list of his wives, daughters, and widows to prove that

the number of virtuous women was a third larger than of women who deserved blame, — an estimate that may not be true in the real world.

Since writing that preface he has been on his guard, and has reinforced his virtuous battalions of men as well as women; but the accusations still continue. So what is he to do?

Do you know what our immorality consists of? In making sins seductive, in excusing them.

But if there were not immense seductions in sins who would commit them? And if there were no vices, where would be the virtues?

Ought you not, in all conscience, to wait till an author declares his work finished before you criticise it? Before you say that there is not a thought of futurity or philosophy in it ought you not to seek out what thought he himself had, or desired to have. His thought will be shown to be the same as that of the Great Whole which is moving around you, if he has the happiness, the good luck, the — I know not what — to paint it fully and faithfully. In certain pictures it is impossible to separate the spirit from the form.

If, in reading this living history of the modern world, you do not prefer — you, shopkeeper, to die like César Birotteau or live like Pillerrault, than be Roguin or du Tillet, — you, young girl, to be Pierrette rather than Mme. de Restaud, — you, wife, to die with Madame de Mortsauf than live like Madame de Nucingen, — you, man, to civilize like Benassis than vegetate like Rogron, to be the rector Bonnet in place of being Lucien de Rubempré, to shed happiness on others like old Genestas instead of living like Vautrin, then, indeed, the purpose of the author has failed. The individual applications of these types, the meaning of the thousand histories which form this history of society may not be understood. But when the whole picture is complete in one great Thought,

which it is not yet time to explain, this will matter very little.

"Pierrette" is the second scene in which celibates are the principal figures, for, though Rogron marries, his marriage is not to be taken as a change; he is still Rogron; he has not long to live, and marriage kills him.

No one knows better than the author the defects of "Pierrette." In some places developments are necessary and a friendly hand has pointed them out. There is also something to change in the malady of which the poor child dies; and some figures certainly need more strokes of the brush. But there are moments when retouching spoils instead of improving a picture; it is better to leave it alone till taste, that lightning of the judgment, returns.

The old man Rouget, in "The Two Brothers," will be the third scene from Provincial life in which the author will endeavour to paint the evils that await celibates during their old age. The subject will not then be exhausted, but enough celibates will have been used for the purpose. *Sat prata biberunt.*

Ha! there are some ninnies who still accuse the author of excessive vanity; it is easy to show them that the proof of his want of vanity is in the manner in which his works are published, which, indeed, gives rise to much reasonable criticism.

[*"THE VILLAGE RECTOR."*]

1841

If this work is complete in relation to what is called in these days drama, it is evidently curtailed in what will be called, throughout all time, morals. It is not so much a question here (as, indeed, it has not been throughout the Scenes from Country life) of relating a history as of spreading certain new and useful truths

— if it can be said that any truth is new; and besides, have not the senseless notions of our epoch restored the charm of novelty to old truths?

Therefore, in the author's plan, this book, not presenting any of those romantic interests eagerly sought by readers who turn over pages they never read again when once they know the secret of the tale, seemed to him so little interesting to the general public that he thought it necessary to increase the interest by a dramatic conception, bearing the imprint of truth, but in harmony with the tone of the work: two immense difficulties about which the reader cares nothing! Consequently, it is not the general public whom the author here addresses so much as the small number of those to whom letters are still dear, and who study the new methods of modern poesy.

If the work to which "The Village Rector" will one day form a pendant (to use a common expression which explains all), if "The Country Doctor" is the application of modern philanthropy to civilization, the work that follows it ought surely to be the application of Catholic repentance. Thus, "The Village Rector" should, in plan, ideas, images, and execution, be a loftier work than the former: for is not religion greater than humanity? It is divine, the other is purely human. Hence, the "Rector" was evidently more difficult, needed more studies, more conceptions dug from the vital self hidden under simple forms. Every work, however grand and poetical you imagine it, is easy to execute in comparison with a religious work to be placed before the eyes of an indifferent or an unbelieving people, invited by illustrious men to fresh revolutions. The political theories which issue from the subject ought to be, having due regard to the times in which we live, bolder even than those advanced in "The Country Doctor." The man who has charge of souls admits, necessarily, fewer compro-



mises than the man who has charge of the body. By what means did the Rector Bonnet make, of a bad, benighted population without beliefs, vowed to misdeeds and even to crime, a population inspired by the best spirit, religious, progressive, excellent? In that, is the book. To explain the men who seconded him, to paint them, to give, above all else, their inmost thought and let them develop it — such is the meaning of this composition.

The history of the commune of Montégnat has been, by the hand of Providence, mingled with the life of a woman still, no doubt, in the hands of the Rector, M. Bonnet, who has made her the instrument by which he achieves his work of pious restoration. By what ways was this great and noble benefactress of a whole canton led? What was her guiding thought? Her life will tell it. This woman is still so sovereign at Montégnat, that every one will understand why her biography occupies so much space in this book.

More than one reader may think that the author did not group around the figure of Véronique such persons as the Rector Bonnet, Archbishop Duteuil, Clousier, Gérard, Roubaud, Grossetête, meaning to make them only supernumeraries. There exists, in the moral order only and not in the dramatic order, a solution of continuity which persons who are interested in questions of high morality and religious politics may have remarked. Until the arrival of Véronique at Montégnac the events are evidently only preliminary to the real book. The principal personage is M. Bonnet, around whom all the personages ought to gravitate; whereas, in the work as now published, the Rector plays a secondary rôle. To those who perceive this gap and who sympathize with the thoughts, long meditated, which have dictated the "Village Rector," the author acknowledges that he has in reserve a book the proper place of which is between the

arrival of all the personages on the scene and the death of Madame Graslin. This coming book contains the conversion to Catholicism of the Protestant engineer, and an exposition of the doctrines of pure monarchy drawn from things most eloquent of the life of country places, such as that of Farrabesche. The Rector Bonnet is seen at work, and all the above details serve to show the means employed by him to realise his evangelizing project.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for this omission, sad in many respects, are derived from causes of a nature to remain hidden; but perhaps it is not useless to say that the state in which want of protection has placed publishers counts for much among them. Perhaps it is a duty, and in the interest of other suffering writers, to explain that in 1840 it is almost impossible for publishers to publish a work in three volumes in which grave questions of morals, politics, philosophy, and religion predominate over parts that are purely romantic. Let us not be weary, until it be repaired, of denouncing this fault of our times and the constant forgetting of the most vital interests of the country, which acts during peace by the pen of her writers as much as she acts during war by the sword of her soldiers. Never have the lettered classes in France been more unfortunate than since the day when writers were put at the head of affairs in the government. This is easily understood: man only fears thoroughly that which he knows well; and then he conceals his fear by affecting contempt.

What there now is of this work has its meaning; the story is complete, and perhaps it will be thought to be one of the most touching of those that the author has invented. The figure of Madame Graslin can sustain comparison with Madame de Mortsauf in "The Lily of the Valley" and with La Fosseuse in "The Country Doctor."

<sup>1</sup> All three parts are now in "The Village Rector." — TR.

["THE COUNTRY DOCTOR." LETTERS RESPECTING IT.]

1833.

My mother will receive, if she has not already done so, a *complete manuscript* — from me! entitled "The Country Doctor." She will send it to you. Attention, Maître Mame [his publisher]! I have been for a long time desirous of the popular fame which consists in selling considerable thousands of copies of a little book like "Atala," "Paul and Virginia," "The Vicar of Wakefield," etc. The multiplying of editions will make up for the lowness of price, but I must have it go into the hands of *all*, — those of the young girl, those of the child, those of the old man, and even into those of the devout. Then, once the book is known (time long or short according to the talent of author and publisher), it becomes an important affair: examples, Lamartine's "Meditations," sixty thousand copies; "Ruins of Volney," etc.

My book is a book conceived in that spirit; a book that a porter's wife and a great lady will both read. I have taken the Gospel and the Catechism, two books having excellent sale, and I have made mine out of them. I have put the scene in a village, and the reader can read the whole book at once, — a rare thing with me! . . .

"The Country Doctor" has cost me ten times the work that "Louis Lambert" did; there is not a sentence, not an idea that I have not considered and reconsidered, read, reread, and corrected; it has been dreadful. But when one tries to attain to the simple beauty of the Gospels, to surpass "The Vicar of Wakefield," and to put in action the "Imitation of Christ" one must toil — and hard, too! Émile de Girardin and that good Borget bet on four hundred thousand copies. Émile will publish it at twenty sous a copy like an almanac, to be sold as they do prayer-books. . . .

At the close of this week you will be able to read my magnificent book, and see how far I have gone. Upon

my word, I think I can now die in peace. I have done a great thing for my country. The book is, to my mind, worth more than laws, or battles won. It is the Gospel in action. . . .

I hope soon to go to Angoulême, and then we will have a day or two of good talk; but I will not wait till then to tell you what tender gratitude there is in my soul for your last letter, and the force with which my literary sorrows drive me to take refuge in the hearts of those who love me, and find there my consolation. You do not know how "The Country Doctor" has been received! By torrents of insults. The three newspapers of my own party which have spoken of it have done so with the utmost contempt for the work and for its author. The others I don't know about. But I do not mind it much; you are my public — you, and a few choice souls whom I desire to please; but you above all, whom I am so proud to know; you whom I have never seen or listened to without gaining some good; you who have the courage to help me in pulling up the weeds in my garden; you who encourage me to perfect myself; you who resemble the angel to whom I owe all;<sup>1</sup> you, so good to my *badnesses*! I alone know with what rapidity I turn to you and seek for your encouragement when some sharp arrow has wounded me; I am like the ringdove, seeking its nest. For you I feel an affection like none other; one that can have no rival and no counterpart. It is so good to be near you! From afar I can tell you all that I think of your soul and of your life without fear of being silenced. God knows there is no one who desires that your path here below may be happy more than I do; would that I could send you the joys you need, just as my heart sends up its prayers to heaven for your happiness. Yes, think that in this volcanic Paris there is a being who thinks

<sup>1</sup> The letter is written to Madame Carraud; this allusion is to Madame de Berny. — Tr.

often of you and of all that is dear to you; who would gladly put away from your life whatever may trouble it; who appreciates you at your true value, — a being with a heart ever young, a heart that shows its real self to none but you and a few of those women who can understand sorrows. . . .

I still have many faults to correct in “The Country Doctor.” The rest of this edition must be sold off before I can have one at twenty sous; but I *must*, for I want to popularize a work as perfect as it is granted to me to make one. . . .

The fiasco of “The Country Doctor” and “Louis Lambert” has grieved me; but my mind is made up; nothing shall discourage me. . . .

I have other griefs. My Boileau, my hypercritic [M. Charles Lemesle], my friend, who judges me and corrects me without appeal, finds many faults in the first two volumes of “The Country Doctor.” I am in despair. However, we will take them out. The work shall be, some day, perfect. I had two days’ illness after he showed me the faults. They are real.

## X.

## LITERATURE. BALZAC'S OWN WORKS.

*Le Livre Mystique*: "The Exiles," "Louis Lambert," "Séraphita." Remarks in Letters. "The Magic Skin" ("La Peau de Chagrin"). Remarks in Letters. Introduction to the *Études Philosophiques*, by M. Félix Davin.

[LE LIVRE MYSTIQUE: "THE EXILES," "LOUIS LAMBERT," "SÉRAPHITA."]

COMPOSED of three separate works in the series of *Études Philosophiques*, this book is intended to present a clear-cut expression of the religious thought which lies like a soul through this long enterprise. Therefore it cannot be published without some preliminary observations.

The nineteenth century, of which the author has endeavoured to depict the vast picture, not forgetting individuals or professions, effects or social principles, is, at this moment, pervaded by doubt. Remark, I beg of you, that the author discusses nothing in his own name; he sees a thing and describes it; he finds a sentiment and he translates it; he accepts facts as they are, puts them in place and follows his plan, without giving ear to complaints that contradict one another. He walks on, inexorable to the obtuse arguments of those who ask him why a stone is square when placed at a corner, and why it is round when it finishes a woman's head in a metope.

If society, which he has taken for the subject of his work as others have taken passing events, were perfect, there would be no painting of it possible; a magnificent



*The Tomb of Balzac in Père la Chaise.*







social Hallelujah could alone be sung as he seats himself at the banquet to perform his concordant part of the function. But this is not how things are; men of the world as well as the men of art are well aware of it; nevertheless many critics, finding the author engaged in painting a galley-slave want him to put his criminal in a pulpit reasoning like Massillon. In this work every one will be what he is; the judge will be judge; the criminal will be criminal; the woman will be in turn virtuous or guilty; the usurer will not be a sheep; the dupe will not be a man of genius; and babes will not be five feet six inches tall. These thousand figures that pose, these thousand and one generic situations will be true or false, well or ill-arranged, more or less clearly drawn, the whole will be jumbled or well marshalled — all that is conceded. But, at any rate, applause and blame should both wait till the work is finished.

These words are neither recriminations nor complaints. The author patiently submits to the eternal "Why?" of Parisians accustomed to read the words PUBLIC NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER on the boarded inclosures which protect from curiosity all public buildings in process of erection. This repetition of a few observations made by a friend of the author (M. Félix Davin) is here necessary to prevent cavilling.

Just as the Chouans pillaged the carriages of the Republic, as Vautrin talked like a convict, as de Marsay wrote in the style of a young man, and Madame de Mortsauf as a religious, solitary, inwardly reflective woman, so Louis Lambert and Séraphita speak and act as mystics should. Here, we are no longer in the region of the *Études de Mœurs*, the first part of the author's work, in which he strove to paint social things as they are. We are in the *Études Philosophiques*, the second part, where sentiments and human theories are personified. Thus Séraphita, spotless and pure expression of mysticism,

cannot have the opinions of the Academy of Sciences on mathematics; she could be everything except member of the Institute; if she knows the infinite, finite measures must seem to her very paltry.

In spite of that artless remark of the sculptor who tells us that when he had carved a mermaid in his marble he was forced to end her off as a fish, because, if you once admit a mermaid, she could not possibly wear the clogs of a grisette, you will meet with many persons who will declare the author crazy, crazy enough to try to prove that two and two do not make four. Others accuse him of atheism. Some pretend that he does not believe what he writes, and is merely amusing himself at the expense of the public. And lastly, many insist that the work is incomprehensible.

The author proclaims here his respect for the great geniuses who have adorned human science; he adores the straight line; he still, unhappily, loves the curve too well; but though he kneels before the glories of mathematics and the miracles of chemistry, he believes, if we admit the existence of spiritual worlds, that the finest theorems are of no utility there; that all the calculations of the finite lapse in eternity; that the Infinite, being, as God is, like unto himself in all his parts, the question of the equality of the round and the square is there solved, and that this possibility ought to content geometricians with heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Remark that the author does not contest the influence of mathematics on the happiness of humanity taken in the mass; an argument supported by Swedenborg and Saint-Martin. But too many persons will advance to the defence of the sacred sciences of man, too few will take an interest in the far-off lights of mysticism, not

<sup>1</sup> Balzac does not see that the spiritual is a science which may be shown to *be one* with human science. — TR.



to put the author here on the weaker side, at the risk of being the butt of satire, that brand which the public press in France puts upon all new ideas. Fortunately, it finds on him the hardest of all human cuirasses: contempt and disdain.

So then, doubt at this moment pervades France. After having lost the political government of the world, Catholicism is losing its moral government. Catholic Rome will, nevertheless, take as long to fall as pagan Rome. What form will the religious sentiment hereafter take? What will be its new expression? The answer is the secret of the future. The Saint-Simonists think that the social coat of mail has lately presented its faultiest side; to an industrial age they offer their practical religion, plain as a maxim, matter-of-fact as a report, a mode of Napoleonic civilization in which minds are enrolled and regimented like the men of the imperial guard. To them, the cause seems less lost than adjourned. Luther was an abler observer of human nature than the Saint-Simonian school. He comprehended that to seek to found a religion in an era of examination was to give himself out for a second Christ; that Christ could not begin over again; and that to glide among all self-loves without wounding any it was necessary to keep to an already-made religion. He therefore desired to bring Rome back to the simplicity of the primitive Church.

The cold negations of Protestantism, the belief in strong-boxes and economic dogmas excellent for the disciples of Barême, a staid religion, well-weighed, without poesy because without mystery, triumphed under the banner of the Gospel.

Mysticism is precisely Christianity in its pure essence. The author proposes nothing new; he has invented nothing; he has brought to light buried riches; he has plunged into the sea and returned with virgin pearls for the necklet of his Madonna. Doctrine of the first Chris-

tians, religion of the anchorites of the desert, mysticism comports with no government, no priesthood. For this reason it has always been the object of the greatest persecutions of the Church. There lies the secret of the condemnation of Fénelon; there the key-note of his quarrel with Bossuet. As religion, mysticism comes in a direct line from Christ through Saint John, author of the Apocalypse; for the Apocalypse is an arch thrown across between Christian mysticism and Indian mysticism; Egyptian and Greek in turn, coming from Asia, preserved in Memphis, formulated to the profit of his Pentateuch by Moses, guarded at Eleusis, at Delphos, understood by Pythagoras, revived by the Eagle of the Apostles, and transmitted nebulously to the University of Paris. In the twelfth century the learned Sigier (see "The Exiles") taught the mystical theology as the science of sciences in that University, the queen of the intellectual world, to which the four Catholic nations were paying court. You will there see Dante coming to enlighten his *Divina Commedia* from the illustrious doctor who would now be forgotten were it not for the lines in which the great Florentine has recorded his gratitude to his master. The mysticism which you will find there, pervading society without alarming the court of Rome because at that time the sublime and beautiful Rome of the middle ages was omnipotent, was transmitted to Madame Guyon, to Fénelon, to Mademoiselle de Bourignon by German authors, among whom the most illustrious is Jacob Boehm. In the eighteenth century came Swedenborg, an evangelist and a prophet, whose figure rises as colossal perhaps as those of Saint John, Pythagoras, and Moses. M. Saint-Martin, who died recently, is the last great mystical writer. He gave, in all respects, the palm to Jacob Boehm over Swedenborg; the author of "Séraphita," on the contrary, ascribes to Swedenborg a superiority without any possible contradiction over

Jacob Bœhm, whose writings he, for his part, owns he cannot yet understand.

The author has not thought it due honour to French literature to keep silence on a poesy so grandiose as that of the mystics. Literary France has worn for five centuries a crown in which a jewel would be missing if the gap were not filled, imperfectly though it be, by this book. After a long and patient labour of years, the author at last risks himself in the most difficult of enterprises, — that of painting the perfect being in the conditions exacted by the laws of Swedenborg severely applied. Unhappily, he can have but few judges. The inextricable difficulties of his work, the danger his own mind ran in plunging into the gulfs of the Infinite opened by the mystics, perceived and sounded by them — who will appreciate all this? How many persons instructed in mystic science can be counted in France? How many know even the titles of books on that science which have thousands of readers in Germany? It needed a passion from childhood for that magnificent religious system to enable him to make, at nineteen years of age, a *SÉRAPHITA*, to have dreamed that being of two natures, to have sketched the statue, and stammered the poem which was to occupy his whole life, before he could give to-day this mere skeleton of it.

What the author ought to say about this work has, fortunately, a general interest. The thorny barrier which, so far, has made mysticism an unapproachable land is *obscurity*; a mortal defect in France, where no one is willing to give deep attention to any author even the most sublime; where Dante himself might never have won fame. But is it not incomprehensible that those who proclaim Light should envelop themselves, as they do, in darkness? The books considered sacred in this intellectual sphere are written without method, without eloquence, and their phraseology is so fantastic, so in-

volved that one may read a thousand pages of Madame Guyon, Swedenborg, and, above all, Jacob Bøhm, without grasping any idea.

You shall know why.

To the eyes of these believers, all is already demonstrated: hence nothing but cries of conviction, psalms of love intoned to celebrate perpetual joys, exclamations wrung out by the beauty of the spectacle! It is like the clamorous applause of a whole people witnessing fireworks on a dark night. In spite of these torrents of dishevelled phrases, the *whole* is sublime, the arguments are crushing, when the intellect has fished them from this great roaring of celestial waves. Imagine the Ocean taken in at a glance; it is marvellous, it transports, it enchants you. But you are on a cape, a headland; you look down upon it; the sun lends it a face which speaks to you of the Infinite. Begin to swim in that Ocean, and all becomes confused; everywhere it looks to you the same, the lines of the horizon escape you, on all sides waves, a dark greenness, the monotony of its voice wearies you; consequently to have an intuition of the Infinite shown in these bewildering books, you must stand upon a headland; the spirit of God will then appear to you on the waters, you will see the moral sun that illumines them. That in which mysticism has been lacking until now is form, poesy. When Saint Peter showed the Keys of Paradise, and the Child Jesus was seen in the arms of a virgin, the crowd comprehended, and the Catholic religion existed. The wily Saint Peter, man of the highest policy and government, was greater in this than Saint Paul, that lion of the mystics, as Saint John is their eagle!

If you can imagine thousands of propositions rising in Swedenborg one after another like waves; if you can figure to your mind the endless arid moors that these authors present; if you will compare the mind striving

to reduce within the limits of logic that sea of frantic phrases with the eye striving to perceive a light in those shadows, you will appreciate the labour of the present writer, the pains he has taken to give a body to this doctrine and to put it within range of our French light-mindedness, which wants to guess at what it does not know, and know what it cannot divine.

Early in life he felt something — there, before him — like a new *Divina Commedia*. Alas! its rhythm needed the whole of a life, and his life compelled him to other work. The sceptre of the rhythm has escaped him. Poesy without its metre is perhaps an impotence; perhaps he has here done no more than indicate the subject to some great poet, humble prosier that he is! but perhaps, also, mysticism will gain something by being brought into the practical language of our country and compelled to run straight, like a carriage on the rail of a railway.

“The Exiles” are the peristyle of the temple. There, the idea appears to the middle ages in all its naïve triumph. “Louis Lambert” is mysticism taken in the act; the seer advancing according to his vision, led to heaven by facts, by his ideas, his temperament; *that* is the history of seers; “Séraphita” is mysticism known to be truth, mysticism personified, shown in all its results.

In this book, the most incomprehensible doctrine thus has a head, a heart, and bones; the Word of the mystics is incarnated; and the author has striven to make it attractive as a modern novel. It is the nature of some substances, if taken alone, to destroy the patient, but medical science adapts them to human weakness; in like manner is it here with author, reader, and subject. Thus he hopes that believers and seers will forgive him for placing the feet of Séraphita in the mud of the globe, in view of the popular understanding she can give to this sublime religion; he hopes that men of the world, allured

by its form, may comprehend the future shown by the hand of Swedenborg pointing to heaven; and that, if the learned of the earth admit a spiritual and divine universe, they will recognize that the sciences of the material universe are of no utility there. In the eyes of poets has the author any need of excuse for poetizing a doctrine, — for having taken the mythical and given it wings? Whatever comes of an author's attempt at a work of faith in a sceptical age, he cannot be blamed by those who are neither savants, poets, nor seers for having embodied a system buried in darkness.

[REMARKS IN LETTERS.]

“Louis Lambert” is a work in which I have tilted with Goethe and Byron, Faust and Manfred, and the joust is not over. I don't know if I have succeeded, but this volume of the *Études Philosophiques* ought to be a final answer to my enemies, and give me gleams of undeniable superiority. So forgive a poor artist his fatigue, his discouragement, and, above all, his momentary detachment from all interests that are foreign to his subject. “Louis Lambert” has cost me such labour! What works I have had to reread in order to write this book! It will, perhaps, some day or other, turn science into new paths. If I had made a purely learned work of it it might have attracted the attention of thinkers, who will now not cast their eyes upon it. But if chance puts it in their way they may speak of it, perhaps! I think it is a fine book. Our friends here tell me so; and you know that they never deceive me. . . .

“Lambert” is a great thing, and will make a sensation. I am satisfied with it; it is a work of profound melancholy and science. I am waiting here at Lyon to give a last combing to the proofs of a work that has nearly



killed me. *Certain friends* may now, perhaps, think me a man of some value! . . .

There are still many faults in "Louis Lambert." What pains that work has cost me! it is frightful. The next edition will be, I hope, as perfect as a human work can be. This toil, and thoughts of this existence have absorbed everything else. I work too hard and am too much harassed to give way to griefs that sleep and make their hole in my heart. Perhaps I shall some day relinquish my ideas about woman; I shall have gone my way without ever receiving from her that which I asked for. . . .

Germany has bought two thousand copies of the pirated "Louis Lambert." France bought only two hundred copies of the true one! Yet I am writing "Séraphita," a work as much above "Louis Lambert" as "Louis Lambert" is above "Gaudissart" — which I am told did not please you. We will talk about that. It is written that I shall never have complete happiness, freedom, liberty, except in perspective. But, dear, I can at least say this, with all the tender effusions of my heart, — that in the course of my long and painful way, four noble beings have held out their hands to me, have encouraged, loved, and pitied me; that yours is one of those noble hearts which have an inalienable priority over my affections; in the silent hours when I look within me the thought of you brings me rich memories. Yes, the egoism of poets and artists is a passion for art which holds their feelings in abeyance. But you have ever the right to claim me, all that I am is yours. . . .

"Séraphita" is advancing; it will appear in the last days of this month. It is a work for which the labour has been crushing and terrible. I have passed, and shall still pass many sleepless nights and days. I write and rewrite, make and unmake; but a few days hence all will be said and done. I shall either have become great, or Pari-

sians will not have understood me. And as with them satire usually takes the place of comprehension, I only look for a far distant, tardy success. The book will be appreciated hereafter, and now, here and there, as it were. I think it will be the book of souls who love to lose themselves in the infinite spaces. There is a chapter headed "The Path to God" which will give me forever all truly religious souls. . . .

For twenty days I have worked steadily twelve hours each day on "Séraphita." The world knows nothing of such toil; it sees, and should see, only results. But I had to absorb the whole of mysticism in order to formulate it. "Séraphita" is an overwhelming work for those who believe. Unhappily, in this sad Paris the Angel may come to be the subject of a ballet. I hope that by the second Sunday in April the book will be out. I shall have to bear much ridicule in society; but I will not go into society; I will stay tranquilly here and write the Memoirs of two young married women. What has tried me horribly of late has been the reprinting of "Louis Lambert." I have tried to bring it to a point of perfection which would leave me easy in mind about the work. Lambert's thoughts at Villenoix still remained to do. I had put, as it were, a hat on that chair to keep the place. Well, the book is done now. It is a new formula for humanity; which is the bond that binds Louis Lambert to Séraphita. I wish that the "Lily," "Louis Lambert," and "Séraphita" should be the culminating point of my literary history. . . .

The *Livre Mystique* is little liked in Paris, so far; the second edition does not sell. But in foreign nations it is very different. There they are impassioned over it. I have just received a letter from a Princess Angélique Radzwill, who envies you your dedication and says it is a whole life for a woman to have inspired that book. I was very pleased for you. *Mon Dieu!* if you could only know how little there is that is personal in my pleasure. . . .

Let us now come to what you say to me of “*Séraphita*.” It is strange that people do not see that *Séraphita* is *all faith*. Faith affirms, and the whole is said. The Angel descends from her sphere to come among the quibblings of reason. She opposes reasoning to reasoning; it would be unworthy of her not to formulate doubt. As for her answer, no sacred writer has ever more energetically proved God. The proof drawn from the infinitude of numbers has surprised learned men. It is fighting them on their own ground with their own weapons.

As for the orthodoxy of the book, Swedenborg is diametrically opposed to the Court of Rome; but who will dare to pronounce between St. Peter and St. John? The mystical religion of Saint John is logical. It will always be that of superior souls. That of Rome is for the millions.

As you say, it is necessary to penetrate the meaning of “*Séraphita*” in order to criticise. But I never counted on a success after “*Louis Lambert*” was so despised. These are books that I make for myself and a few others. While I write, you are probably reading “*The Lily of the Valley*,” — another *Séraphita*, but orthodox, this one! I won’t talk about it. Literature and its accompaniments weary me. When a book is done I like to forget it; I go back to it two or three years later only to purge its faults. . . .

[“*THE MAGIC SKIN:*” “*LA PEAU DE CHAGRIN.*”]

There are, undoubtedly, many authors whose personal character is vividly reproduced by the nature of their compositions, and with whom the work and the man are one and the same thing. But there are other writers whose soul and habits and morals contrast strongly with the form and basis of their work; so that there is no positive rule by which to recognize the different degrees of affinity which

are found between the favourite thoughts of the artist and the fantasies of his composition.

Such likenesses and unlikenesses are clues to a moral nature as whimsical and secret in its action as Nature herself is fantastic in the caprices of generation. The production of organized beings and ideas are two incomprehensible mysteries, and the resemblances or the total differences which these two species of creation may present with their authors prove very little either for or against paternal legitimacy.

Petrarch, Lord Byron, Hoffmann, and Voltaire were the men of their genius ; whereas Rabelais, a sober man, belied the gluttony of his style and the character of his work ; he drank water while lauding the *purée septembrale*, just as Brillat-Savarin ate little while discoursing of good cheer.

So it was with the most original author of whom Great Britain can boast, Charles Robert Maturin, the priest to whom we owe "Eva," "Melmoth," "Bertram ;" who was gay, gallant, and devoted to ladies ; that man of terrible conceptions became in the evening a squire of dames, a dandy. So with Boileau, whose gentle and courteous conversation did not conform to the satirical spirit of his insolent verse. The greater number of the graceful poets have been men quite indifferent to grace in themselves ; resembling sculptors who, completely absorbed in idealizing the most beauteous human forms, in rendering the voluptuousness of lines, in combining the scattered traits of beauty, are almost always ill-dressed themselves, contemptuous of appearance, keeping the types of the beautiful in their soul, and letting nothing of them transpire externally.

It would be easy to multiply examples of these disunions and characteristic cohesions between man and his thought, but the double fact is so frequently seen that it would be foolish to insist upon it further.

Would literature be possible if the noble heart of Schiller were suspected of complicity with François Moor, the most

execrable conception of profound wickedness that a dramatist ever put upon the stage? In fact the gloomiest tragic authors are mostly very mild individuals with patriarchal manners; witness the venerable Ducis.

But in spite of the uncertainty of the laws which rule literary physiognomy, readers can never remain impartial between the poet and his book. Involuntarily they picture a figure in their thought, they build a man, suppose him young or old, tall or short, amiable or disagreeable. The author once imagined, all is settled; their minds are made up! He then becomes a sort of multiplied being, a species of imaginary creature, dressed by the fancy of the reader, who usually robs him of some merit to clothe him with a vice of his own. . . .

Though restrained within the limits of a preface this psychological essay may help to explain the curious disparity which usually exists between the talent of a writer and his personality. Certainly this question will interest female poets even more than it does the present author.

Literary art, having for its object the reproduction of nature by thought, is the most complicated of all the arts.

A painter paints a sentiment, lays on its colours, lights, half-tints, shadows, depicts with accuracy a narrow scene, sea or landscape, men or buildings, and that is the whole of it.

Sculpture is even more restrained in its resources. It has nothing but a stone and one colour to express the richest of natures, sentiment in human form; consequently the sculptor hides within his marble immense toils of idealization, which few persons comprehend and give him credit for.

But, far more vast, thought includes all: the writer must be familiar with all effects, all natures; he must have within himself I know not what concentric mirror in which, according to his visions, the universe reflects

itself; if not, the poet and the observer do not exist within him; for it is not enough to merely see; he must remember, he must engrave his impressions in a certain choice of words, and deck them with the grace of images or communicate the life of primordial sensations to them.

Now, without entering into the fussy *aristotelisms* created by each author for his work, each pedant for his theory, the author thinks he shall be in agreement with all intelligence, greater or less, by dividing literary art into two very distinct parts: *observation* and *expression*.

Many distinguished men are gifted with the talent of observing without possessing that of giving a living form to their thoughts; just as other writers are endowed with a marvellous style without being guided by that sagacious and searching genius which sees and registers everything. From these two intellectual dispositions result, in some sort, the literary sight and touch. To one man *le faire* — the doing; to another, the conception; this one plays with a lyre without producing a single one of those sublime harmonies that make us weep or think; that one composes poems for himself alone, for want of an instrument.

The union of the two powers makes the complete man; but this rare and fortunate concordance is still not genius, or, to say it more simply, it does not constitute the will which gives birth to a work of art.

Besides these two conditions essential to talent there occurs in poets or writers who are really philosophical an inexplicable, inexpressible phenomenon, of which science can render but small account. It is a sort of second sight, which enables them to divine the truth in all possible situations; or, to put it better, some power, I know not what, transports them where they ought and wish to be. They invent the truth, by analogy, or they see the object to be described, whether that object comes to them or they go to the object.

The author contents himself with laying down the



terms of the problem without seeking for the solution of it; the matter, for him, concerns a justification and not the deduction of a philosophical theory.

Thus it is that an author ought to have analyzed all characters, espoused all manners and morals, roamed the whole globe, and felt all passions before he writes a book; *or* passions, countries, manners, morals, characters, accidents of nature, accidents of morals, should come themselves into his thought. He is a miser, he conceives avarice momentarily when he draws the portrait of Dumbiedikes. He is criminal, he conceives crime, calls it to him, contemplates it, in writing "*Lara*." There is no proper term for this *cervico-literary* proposition. But to those who study human nature, it is clearly evident that a man of genius possesses the two powers.

He goes, in spirit, through the spaces as easily as things, formerly observed, rise up in him faithfully, beautiful with the grace, or terrible with the early horror which had seized him. He has really seen his world, or his soul has revealed it to him intuitively. Thus the most glowing and most exact painter of Florence has never been in Florence; thus such or such a writer has marvellously depicted the desert, its sands, its palms, its mirage, without ever setting foot on the Sahara.<sup>1</sup>

Have men the power of making the universe come into their brain, or is their brain a talisman with which they abolish the laws of time and space? Science hesitates long before choosing between these two mysteries equally inexplicable.<sup>2</sup> But always and constantly is it certain that inspiration unfolds to the poet's eye transfigurations without number like the magical phantasmagoria of our

<sup>1</sup> Thus Balzac himself drew that marvellous picture of the Norwegian fiord in "*Séraphita*." — TR.

<sup>2</sup> Not inexplicable; because, thought being divine, — the divine thread connecting us with the divine, — it can do all, and will do all in the day when this truth becomes apparent. — TR.

dreams. A dream is perhaps the natural play of this singular power when it is left unoccupied.

These wonderful faculties, which the world justly admires, an author possesses in a greater or less degree, according to the greater or less perfection (or it may be, imperfection) of his organs. Perhaps, too, the gift of creation is a feeble spark fallen from on high to man; may not the inspirations of great genius be a noble and lofty prayer? If they are not, why should our valuation be measured by the strength, the intensity of the celestial ray which shines from them? Or must we estimate the enthusiasm we feel for great men by the degree of pleasure they give us, and the greater or less utility of their works? Choose ye between materialism and spiritualism!

This literary metaphysic has led the author far away from the personal question. For although, in the simplest product, Riquet with the Tuft for instance, is the hand of an artist visible, and often some naïve little work bears the imprint of the *mens divini*or as much as the loftiest poem, the author has not the pretension to write for himself of this great theory—like some of his contemporaries, whose prefaces are little pilgrimages of little Childe Harolds. He only desires to claim for authors the former privileges of the clergy, who were suffered to judge themselves. . . .

The world is demanding of literature fine and noble paintings; but where are the types? Your commonplace clothes, your abortive revolutions, your discoursing bourgeois, your dead religion, your extinct powers, your kings on half-pay,—are they so poetic that you want them transfigured?

We can do nothing in these days but scoff. Satire is the literature of expiring societies. Consequently, the author of this book, “The Magic Skin,” submissive to all the chances of literary enterprise, expects to encounter fresh blame.

## MORAL.

François Rabelais, learned and prudent man, good Tourangian withal, has said:—

*Les Thélémites estre grands mesnagiers de leur peau et sobres de chagrin.* [The Thélémites were great sparcers of their skin, and sober in griefs.]

Admirable maxim! careless, selfish, eternal moral! Pantagruel was made for it, or it for Pantagruel.

The author no doubt deserves to be finely vituperated for having dared to drive his hearse without baked meats, wine, or lechery, along the joyous roads of Maître Alcofribas, that most terrible of scoffers whose immortal satire has already caught, as it were in a talon, the future and the past of man.

But this work is the humblest of all the stones brought for the pedestal of his statue by a poor aboriginal of the gentle land of Touraine.

## [REMARKS IN LETTERS.]

I am in full swing with that terrible “Magic Skin,” which, unlike its hero, I long to see finished. I am alone at Nemours, without a single book, in a little pavilion at one end of the estate. Thank God, the book is nearly done. I work night and day and live on coffee. By way of distraction to this daily work I have to do “The Red Inn,” much as one embraces one’s neighbour’s wife. But the success of the book is pretty well prepared. Madame Recamier claims a reading aloud of it; so it will have an immense number of puffers in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. . . .

Now, as concerns “The Magic Skin” I shall not defend myself against your criticism except by a single word. The work is not intended to stand alone. It comprises the premises of a work (forgive the pedantry of that expression)

which I shall be proud to have attempted even if I succumb in the enterprise. As you feel so kindly to me — I measure your feeling by your solicitude — read the second edition, under the title of “*Études Philosophiques.*” You will see that if I sometimes destroy I also build up: “Jesus Christ in Flanders,” “The Exiles,” “The Hated Son,” “The Study of a Woman,” may perhaps prove to you that I do not lack faith, or conviction, or gentleness. I plough my furrow conscientiously. I try to be the man of my subject, and to accomplish my work with courage and perseverance.

“The Magic Skin” is meant to formulate the present age, our life, our egotism. This reproduction of our types has not been understood, but my consolation, madame, has been in the sincere approbation that some have given me, and in criticism made, like yours, in friendship and good faith. Therefore do not think that I am indifferent to your letter, so full of the touching elegies that are natural to a woman’s heart. Such sympathies, excited so far away, are indeed a treasure; under all misfortunes, they are my purest pleasures; but perhaps the sentiment you have made me feel would have been deeper if, instead of seeing in my book only the compelled portrait of a woman celebrated for having never loved, you had attached yourself to that of her in whom is pictured the noblest devotions of woman, her candid love, and the richest poems of her heart. For me, Pauline exists — only more beautiful. If I have made her a vision, it is that no one may be master of my secret. . . .

In early youth I lived in a little street you probably do not know, the rue Lesdiguières. Love of knowledge had driven me to a garret, where I worked during the night, passing my days in the library of Monsieur, which was near by. I lived frugally, taking upon me the conditions of monastic life, so essential to workers. I seldom went out for pleasure. Only one passion drew me away from my studies, but even that was a form of study. I

walked the streets to observe the manners and ways of the faubourg, to study its inhabitants and learn their characters. Ill-dressed as the workmen themselves, and quite as indifferent to the proprieties, there was nothing about me to put them on their guard. I mingled in their groups, I watched their bargains, and heard their disputes at the hour when their day's work ended. The faculty of observation had become intuitive with me. I could enter the souls of others, all the while conscious of their bodies; or rather, I grasped external details so thoroughly that my mind instantly passed beyond them. I possessed the faculty of living the life of the individual on whom I exercised my observation, and of substituting myself for him, like the dervish in the Arabian Nights who assumed the body and soul of those over whom he pronounced certain words.

To what have I owed this gift? Is it second-sight? Can it be one of those faculties the abuse of which leads to insanity? I have never sought to discover the sources of this power; I only know that I possess and use it. I must tell you that ever since I became aware of the faculty, I have decomposed these elements of those heterogeneous masses called the People, and I have analyzed them in a manner that enables me to appraise both their good and their evil qualities.

[INTRODUCTION TO *ÉTUDES PHILOSOPHIQUES*, by *M. Felix*  
*Darwin.*]

When expressing in our introduction to the *Études de Mœurs* the thought that guided the author to that work we gave the reader to understand that it was still only the base on which he proposed to erect two other works, where would be gradually developed loftier ideas, and where new formulas concerning the future of societies would be

unfolded poetically. The *Études Philosophiques* is the first of those two works.

The conception and birth of M. de Balzac's works form a curious phenomenon worthy of observation, as also the unexpected developments which have fertilized them, and the large superstructures that have risen upon them. The history of literature offers few examples of this progressive elaboration of an idea which, undecided in the first instance and formulated only by simple tales, has suddenly taken an extension which places it at the heart of the highest philosophy.

Such works are and must naturally be subject to certain variations of thought, certain caprices of execution. Under pain of exhaustion, the author could not follow, as a mason cuts his granite block, a line traced out by a cord. The regularity of such work would have killed inspiration and wearied the vigour of his mind. Hence have come certain misplacements of subjects, for which critics have blamed him, though they were really the necessities of his position. Public demand, which all publishers hasten to meet, wants books with all its might; little they care for the meaning of the works they publish. Consequently, such or such a tale which had nothing philosophic about it and obviously belonged to Scenes of private life is put into the Philosophical studies; the exactions of commerce, the need of the moment misplaced them. The author however, did not disturb himself about these transpositions, any more than an architect inquires whence the stones with which he erects his building come. Perhaps before unveiling his design to the public he wanted to try his forces; perhaps he waited, before freeing his edifice from its scaffoldings, until certain sculptures were finished, the principal lines defined, or, at any rate, till the frontage rose broad and clear.

Better informed than certain critics who have hastened to attack M. de Balzac on his biographical side, we have



Information as to the more studious and unknown portion of his life, that of his most poetic moment. This was in the days of a great penury inflicted on him by the paternal will, which was wholly opposed to the vocation of poet; to this we owe the fine narrative of Raphael in "The Magic Skin." During those years, namely 1818, 1819, 1820, M. de Balzac, living in a garret in the Rue Lesdiguères, near the Library of the Arsenal, worked without respite in comparing, analyzing, and summarizing the works which the philosophers and physicians of antiquity, of the middle ages, and of the last two centuries have left us on the brain of man. This tendency of his mind was a predilection of his nature. From these first studies has issued a scientific life-work. . . .

As we have said elsewhere, the day when the artist came out from the reverse side of his tapestry to see the design of his warp and the effect produced by his colours, he perceived, in spite of himself it may be, that he was developing an instinct he had in his soul; he was deducing proofs of his inward knowledge; he was making an analytical work, the synthesis of which he bore within himself; he was expressing the drama and the poesy of his work before bringing clearly to the light its physiological formulas.

We have elsewhere shown that the *Études de Mœurs* was an exact representation of all social effects; a gallery of pictures, ably divided into groups, each of which has its destination. Those studies are the base from which the *Études Philosophiques* are about to rise. After pointing out in the *Études de Mœurs au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* all social sores, depicting all professions, after searching through all localities, exploring all periods of life, after showing man and woman in all their transformations, civil or natural, after having, in short, pictured social effects, the author is now, in these philosophical studies, about to seek the cause of those effects.

In the first stratum of this work are pressed and crowded together individualities typified; in the second stand forth the types individualized. Those words reveal the literary law by means of which M. de Balzac has been able to throw life and sentiment into his written world. So that where in the *Études de Mœurs* he has painted (for instance) in Père Grandet a miser who seems to be avarice in its entirety, here, in the *Études Philosophiques*, his pen puts avarice into a struggle with itself in Maître Cornelius, an allegorical personage who has in him the whole essence of a miser painted full length. Effects being more numerous than causes, the *Études Philosophiques* seem to offer a more restricted circle than the *Études de Mœurs*. That is true. But if the work diminishes in size, it gains in intensity; to express it in one word, it condenses itself.

Now, to disengage by analysis the essence of this second part of the great work, we must show the soul that moves it, we must note the brilliant reflections cast upon it by the mysterious science the thought of which guides the author in spite of himself. We acknowledge that this endeavour requires in the critic a conscientious reading and study which the modern critic has not. For ourselves, if we did not feel the beauties of the work more deeply than its defects, perhaps its hidden meaning might have escaped us. But certain passages brought together, a few epigraphs studied with care, have put us on the track of a right comprehension.

It became evident to us that M. de Balzac considers Thought the cause of man's disorganization, consequently that of Society. He believes that all ideas, consequently all sentiments, are dissolvents, more or less active. Instincts, violently over-excited by factitious combinations created by social ideas, can, according to him, produce in man a sudden blasting, or cause him to fall into a continuous coma resembling death. He be-

lieves that thought, increased by the transitory force given to it by passion and such as society has made it, becomes to man a poison, a dagger. In other words, and following the axiom of Jean-Jacques, "The man who thinks is a diseased animal."

"Assuredly," says M. Philarète Chasles, "there was never a more tragic theme. According as a man civilizes himself he kills himself. The disorder and ruin brought by intellect into man, considered as an individual and a social being, such is the idea which M. de Balzac has cast into his books. Rabelais has seen in another age the strange effect of religious thought, which by permeating society ended by dissolving it. The soul made divine by Christianity had invaded all things. Spirituality effaced matter. Symbolism, idealization reigned supreme. For a symbol the West hurled itself upon the East. That symbol reduced poesy to the condition of a phantom by multiplying allegorical personifications, by banishing from its domain all living beings, flesh and human blood. Rabelais, he too, armed himself with a symbol to make war upon the symbol: *Holà, Messer Gaster, here's your reign!* Barrels full of hippocras, good sausages well-spiced, junketings gigantic, worship of the *dive bouteille* in this sweet abbey of Thélème, where the liturgy is Do-nothing—come! and give us in a vast epic the apotheosis of this human body which they are trampling underfoot."

The era of Rabelais has passed, that which he inaugurated pursues its cycle. No longer are the ravages of idealistic thought to be conquered, but those of analytical sensualism, which a philosophical novel-writer is to-day pointing out.

Certainly the axiom of Rousseau, commented on by Godwin, poetized by Byron, shows how little novel is this initial thought of M. de Balzac. There, however, is precisely where the grandeur of his work begins. The

greatest discoveries of mathematical or physical science are never anything but the proof sought, found, or divined of a fact already known. Generations had seen the revolutions of earth and skies: Newton, Kepler, Lagrange, Laplace, Arago told and are still telling the causes; in a word they prove. The physico-moral fact which moves the social world had been already better formulated by the wisdom of nations than by Rousseau's maxim. "The blade wears out the scabbard" say the people. M. de Balzac writes "Louis Lambert." He *proves* after the manner of the great scientists.

We cite the history of "Louis Lambert" with a purpose. There will be found, in its germ, this theory, this cruelly practical science, some say, which would terminate philosophical discussion. To Louis Lambert, *Will, Thought* were living forces. If this proposition be proved, see where it leads! Before publishing "Louis Lambert" the author had said in "The Magic Skin": "She (Fédora) seemed much amused at hearing that the human will was a material force, like steam." Study the epigraph placed at the head of "Adieu," taken from "César Birotteau," in which the author paints a woman born suddenly to life on recovering her reason; child in weakness, but a woman in feeling perfect happiness. Life and love fall upon her like a thunderbolt; she cannot bear the shock and dies! "The boldest physiologist," says the terrible epigraph,<sup>1</sup> "are frightened by the physical results of this moral phenomenon, which is, nevertheless, an inward blasting, and, like all electrical effects, capricious and strange in its methods." See, too, in "The Country Doctor" the discussion on suicide. "It is the thought," says Benassis, "which kills, not the pistol." And finally in the last edition of "Louis Lambert," occur these words: "Our brain is the matrix into which we transport all that our diverse organizations can

<sup>1</sup> Omitted in "Adieu," but found in "César Birotteau." — TR.

absorb of ethereal matter, — the common basis of several substances known under the improper names of electricity, heat, light, galvanic and magnetic fluid, etc., — and from which it issues in the form of thought.” Connect these scattered fragments with the fine pages in which Balthazar Claës explains the absolute chemical to his wife, “Our feelings are the effect of a gas that disengages itself,” and do you not see here the elements of a scientific work, the lightning of which flashes out in spite of the author?

Here, indeed, we are far from Rousseau’s man who through thought is a diseased animal. The question is indefinite. What is the end of man when he who desires nothing, who lives the life of a plant, exists a hundred years, whereas the creative artist dies young? “Where the sun is, there is thought,” says Louis Lambert: “where is cold, there is cretinism, there is longevity.” That fact in itself is a science. These words, and many others which expand or confirm them, sown through the pages of M. de Balzac, explain his *Études Philosophiques*.

Before taking up Society, which is composed of men, the author was obliged, necessarily, to decompose man, who is, so to speak, the unit of society. Critics have missed seeing that “The Magic Skin” is a physiological judgment delivered by modern science on human life; that this work is the poetic expression of that judgment — deduction made of social individualities. The effect produced by desire, by passion, on the capital of human forces is there magnificently shown. Hence the moral so energetically pictured by Corporal Trim by a twirl of his stick in the air, of which M. de Balzac has made an epigraph very ill-understood by the majority of his readers. Few persons have perceived that after such a judgment pronounced upon our organization there was no other resource for the generality of men than to let

themselves go to the serpentine ways of life, the fantastic undulations of their destiny.

So, having poetically formulated, in "The Magic Skin," the system of mankind, considered as organization, and having drawn from it this axiom, "Life decreases in exact proportion to the power of desires, or the lavishness of ideas," the author takes that axiom as a guide takes a torch in the catacombs of Rome, and says to us: "Follow me! Let us examine the mechanism of which you have seen the effects in the *Études de Mœurs*.

He then marshals before our eyes, in a long procession, human sentiments in all they have that is most expressive; and he counts on our intelligence to understand from these the less violent crises which form the events of individual lives. He shows the *idea* exaggerating *instinct*, arriving at passion, and, incessantly under the coercion of social influences, becoming disorganized. Thus, in "Adieu," the idea of happiness, exalted to its highest social degree, blasts the wife, and by the wife the author means the wife and the woman who loves. In "The Recruit" it is the mother who dies by the violence of maternal feeling. Here, then, is woman considered under her three social aspects: as wife, mother, and loving woman, and becoming, under all those aspects, the victim of the Idea. In "El Verdugo," it is the idea of dynasty putting an axe into the hands of a son, and making him commit all crimes in one. "There," says M. Philarète Chasles, "parricide is ordered by a family in the name of a social chimera, parricide to save a title!"

And behold how in "The Elixir of Life" the idea of heredity becomes murderous also, and how sharp the dagger it puts into the hands of the children! After which, follow me, if you have the nerve, and let us gaze together at that terrible *drama enacted on the seashore*. Do you see him, that stern penitent, seated motionless on his pinnacle of rock? There again the Idea has



wrought its havoc. Paternity, in turn, has become death-dealing. That penitent is a father who drowns his son because he sees in him instincts which society reproves; he makes himself a murderer that his son may not become one.

Examine now that other Study, the ingenious title of which is, in itself alone, a whole biography: "The History of the Rise and Fall of César Birotteau, perfumer, chevalier of the Legion of honour, and assistant-mayor of the second arrondissement of the city of Paris." Here we find the development of the discouraging axiom formulated in "The Magic Skin" and marching through the world, casting light on all catastrophes. César Birotteau, the perfect type of an honest merchant, the merchant to whom respect and consideration is an indispensable atmosphere, is killed suddenly by a thought of honesty as by a pistol-shot; he had borne misfortune, drop by drop, he could not bear the joy, the life that fell upon him like a water-spout and crushed him. This study is one chapter the more added to the history of the Family, which M. de Balzac's pen so affectioned. The poor vicar of Saint-Gatien is here represented in the character of his brother; but François Birotteau is an individuality, whereas César Birotteau will ever be regarded as the type of a numerous class to which belong many personages in the author's work, — modest figures, whose grandeur comes from the manner in which they detach themselves from the background of human suffering, which they seem to awaken with their own. Such, for instance, are La Fosseuse and Gondrin in "The Country Doctor;" La grande Nanon, Mme. Grandet, and her daughter in "Eugénie Grandet;" The Hated Son, Juana de Mancini, Colonel Chabert, Père Goriot, Pauline de Villeñoix, and many others.

In truth, no author has better assigned its due part to each of the social spheres. If he transfigures the

world of millionnaires, he seems to bear affection to the world that suffers, to caress it; throughout his work the robbed and despoiled are pictured compassionately beside the spoliators. Some day this justice will be done him. If Walter Scott pleads for the gold-laced coats, M. de Balzac wakens our sympathies for bravely borne misfortunes, for domestic griefs. His style is cutting, his satire incisive for none but the rich; for the poor and suffering his palette bears tender colours.

We come now to "Maître Cornélius," a powerful historic study, where we find distinctly drawn the curious features of that great figure of Louis XI., hitherto incompletely reproduced in the pictures of romance-writers and dramatists. And here — see what inevitable logic! — here is the Idea of avarice killing the miser in the person of the old silversmith. "The Hidden Masterpiece" shows us art destroying its own work, — the first initiation to the tragedy of Louis Lambert. In "The Red Inn," that bloody history, perhaps the most terrific M. de Balzac ever imagined, we find an analogy, magnificently executed, between the idea of the crime and the crime itself. There, to our mind, apart from the details of the composition, we find the severest deductions from the general principle.

The glowing and learned study of "The Exiles" contains several identical presentations of that principle: the suicide of the lad whom ambition for heaven has disgusted with life; genius becoming fatal to a great poet; and the idea of country making him cry out, "Death to the Guelphs!" at the moment when he has just described the infernal torments destined for murderers. "Jesus Christ in Flanders" is the demonstration of the power of faith, considered also as an Idea. Here the habitual conclusion of M. de Balzac might be easily applied, for to how many martyrs has not that idea been fatal! But here he rests for an instant from his terrible theory to

allow a ray of light to dart through the mass of shadows which he shows to be surrounding us. In this tale the pariahs of society, those it banishes from its universities and its colleges, remain faithful to their beliefs, and preserve by their moral purity the strength of the faith that saves them; while the superior beings, proud of their high capacity, see their woes increased by pride, and their sorrows by their intellect. The fantastic dream in the church is a startling vision of religious ideas destroying one another, tottering and crumbling down in masses, ruined by unbelief, which is also an idea.

"Louis Lambert" is the most deeply penetrating and admirable demonstration of the fundamental axiom of the *Études Philosophiques*. It is Thought killing the Thinker,—a fact cruelly true, which M. de Balzac has followed step by step in the brain; a fact of which "Manfred" is the poem and "Faust" the drama.

These high philosophic views will be completed hereafter by other studies now germinating in the thought of the author.<sup>1</sup> In our desire to render an account to our own mind of a work the aim and breadth of which cause fear, and where thought loses itself like a traveller led astray in a labyrinth of arcades in a city that no longer exists, we have discovered in the *Études Philosophiques* traces of a vivifying hope which brightens these disheartening sketches of the human mind. It seems to us, if we may risk the figure, that from the bosom of those unchained passions which cry out so powerfully — as in the last of "The Elixir of Life" — a saintly voice, full of sweetness, mysterious, yet consoling, rises above those dreadful cries, and mounts to heaven. Collecting, in thought, those five great poems, "The Hated Son," "The Exiles," "Louis Lambert,"

<sup>1</sup> "Séraphita" did not appear, except in two short extracts in July 1834, until one year after the publication of M. Davin's introduction to the *Études Philosophiques*, here given. — TR.

“Jesus Christ in Flanders,” and “Séraphita,” and supposing certain added links and additional compositions, we have come to believe with joy that amid our feelings blasted by analysis the author means to send a radiant beam of faith, a melodious, Christian metempsychosis, which, beginning in the pains of earth, shall end in heaven.

We asked the question, not without emotion, of the author, and received from him the confirmation of our belief in words that came from the soul, and revealed a noble heart.

So when this architect has ceased his work a Gleam divine will illumine his cathedral, the destination of which will then be twofold — like that of those fine buildings of the middle ages, where human passions take the form outside of weird, fantastic figures of men and animals, while within, the pure beauty of the altar shines radiant.

Let us hope that neither discouragement nor illness nor poverty may snatch from his hand the creative tool; for — as we have been the first to say, and we glory in saying it — here is one of the most enormous enterprises that a single man has ever dared conceive. It is a work which a poet described in our hearing as the Arabian Nights of the West, without being aware that these various morsels, so diverse, so poetic, so true taken separately, are to blend and intertwine, and produce the *speculum mundi* of which we spoke.

And what will it be later, when the third part, the title of which is known to his friends, when the *Études Analytiques* appear, to which belong: “The Little Miseries of Human life,” “The Physiology of Marriage,” “The Anatomy of Educating bodies,” “The Pathology of Social life,” “The Monograph of Virtue,” “A Philosophical and Political Dialogue on the perfection of the Nineteenth century.” [None of these, except the first two, did Balzac live to write.]

*Fac-simile of the writing and signature of Balzac.*





it n'ya impossible en r'muer,  
J'ai en un p'ocher accident  
qui m'tient au l'ed, j'ai en con  
p. 1 Jour, j'in action, agone  
un jante l'up'ée, .....

.....

R. 500  
Dallag



Thus when the *Études de Mœurs* have painted Society in all its *effects*, the *Études Philosophiques* will declare the *causes*, and the *Études Analytiques* will delve out the *principles*. Those three words are the key to this Work, vertiginous in its depth, astounding in its details, the true bearings of which we have endeavoured here to show.

## [REMARKS IN LETTERS.]

October 26, 1834.

I have sent you, without letter of advice, the first part of the *Études Philosophiques*. You know it all, but let me believe that you will take an interest in those enormous corrections à la Buffon (he corrected immensely) which are to make my entire work a monument in our fine language. I think that in 1838 the three parts of this gigantic work will be, if not completed, at least so built up that a judgment can be formed of the mass.

The *Études de Mœurs* will represent all social effects, without one situation in life, or one physiognomy, or a single character of man or woman, or a manner of living, a profession, a social zone, a French region, or anything whatsoever of childhood, old age, middle age, politics, justice, or war, having been forgotten.

That laid down, the history of the human heart traced fibre by fibre, the social history given in all its parts, we have the base. The facts will not be imaginary facts; they will be what are happening everywhere.

Then the second stratum is the *Études Philosophiques*; for after effects come causes. I shall have painted in the *Études de Mœurs* sentiments and their action, life and its movement. In the *Études Philosophiques* I shall tell *why* those sentiments, *on what* that life; what is the line, what are the conditions beyond which neither society nor man exist; and after having

traversed it (society) in order to describe it, I shall traverse it again to judge it. Thus, in the *Études de Mœurs* are *individualities* typified; in the *Études Philosophiques* are *types* individualized. In this way I shall have given life everywhere: to the type by individualizing it, to the individual by typifying him. I shall have given thought to the fragment; and to thought the life of the individual.

Then, after *effects* and *causes* will come the *Études Analytiques*, of which the "Physiology of Marriage" forms a part, for after *effects* and *causes* we must search for *principles*. Manners and morals (*mœurs*) are the stage; causes are the coulisses and the machinery; principles are the author. But, according as the work rises in spirals to the heights of thought, it draws in closer, it condenses itself. Though twenty-four volumes are needed for the *Études de Mœurs*, only fifteen are required for the *Études Philosophiques*, and nine for the *Études Analytiques*. Thus man, society, humanity will be described, judged, analyzed, without repetitions and in a work which will be like a Western Arabian Nights.

When all is finished, my pediment carved, my rubbish cleared away, my last touches given, it will be seen that I was right or that I was wrong. Then, after I have made the poesy, the demonstration of a whole system, I will write the Science of it in an "Essay on Human Forces."

H. DE BALZAC.

## APPENDIX.





# APPENDIX.

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## I.

BALZAC'S LAST RE-ARRANGEMENT OF

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

DEDICATED TO LAURENT-JAN.

*by the undersigned builder,*

DE BALZAC.

This list, made in 1845, was never used. The books named in italics are those that Balzac projected but never finished. Some he did not begin; some he studied for years, but did not write; others are half completed and unpublished.

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## CATALOGUE

OF THE WORKS THAT WILL BE CONTAINED IN THE

COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

FIRST PART: *Études de Mœurs*. SECOND PART: *Études Philosophiques*. THIRD PART: *Études Analytiques*.

### FIRST PART. *Études de Mœurs*.

Six books: 1. Scenes from Private Life. 2. Scenes from Provincial Life. 3. Scenes from Parisian Life. 4. Scenes from Political Life. 5. Scenes from Military Life. 6. Scenes from Country Life.

#### I. SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE.

*Children. A Young Ladies' School. Interior of a College-school. Fame and Sorrow. The Rural Ball. Memoirs of Two Young*

Married Women. The Purse. Modeste Mignon. A Start in Life. Albert Savarus. Vendetta. A Double Life. The Peace of a Home. Madame Firmiani. Study of a Woman. Paz. A Daughter of Eve. Colonel Chabert. The Message. The Grenadière. The Deserted Woman. Honorine. Béatrix. Gobseck. Père Goriot. Pierre Grassou. The Atheist's Mass. The Commission in Lunacy. The Marriage Contract. *Sons-in-law and Mothers-in-law*. Another Study of a Woman.

## II. SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE.

The Lily of the Valley. Ursula. Eugénie Grandet. Pierrette. The Vicar of Tours. The Two Brothers. The Illustrious Gaudissart. *Wrinkled People*. The Muse of the Department. *An Actress on her Travels*. Bureaucracy. *The Original*. *The Heirs of Boisrouge*. The Old Maid. The Gallery of Antiquities. *Jacques de Metz*. Lost Illusions. The Two Poets. A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris. David Séchard.

## III. SCENES FROM PARISIAN LIFE.

Ferragus. The Duchesse de Langeais. The Girl with Golden Eyes. Bureaucracy. Sarrasine. Rise and Fall of César Biotteau. Nucingen and Co. Facino Cane. The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Splendour and Misery of Courtesans (Lucien de Rubempré). The Last Incarnation of Vautrin. *Great People, the Hospital, and the People*. A Prince of Bohemia. Comedians Unknown to Themselves. *Scraps of French Talk*. *A View of Courts of Law*. The Lesser Bourgeoisie. *Among Savants*. *The Stage As it is*. The Brotherhood of Consolation.

## IV. SCENES FROM POLITICAL LIFE.

An Episode under the Terror. *History and the Novel*. An Historical Mystery. *Two Ambitious Men*. *The Attaché to an Embassy*. *How a Ministry is Made*. The Deputy of Arcis. Z. Marcas.

## V. SCENES FROM MILITARY LIFE.

*The Soldiers of the Republic, three episodes*. *The Opening of a Campaign*. *The Vendéans*. The Chouans. *The French in*

*Egypt. The Prophet. The Pacha. A Passion in the Desert. The Army on the March. The Consular Guard. Before Vienna. A Battle. The Besieged Army. The Plain of Wagram. The Inn-keeper. The English in Spain. Moscow. The Battle of Dresden. The Stragglers. The Foot-soldiers. A Cruise. The pontoons. The Campaign of France. The Last Battle-field. The Emir. La Pénissière. The Algerine Corsair.*

## VI. SCENES FROM COUNTRY LIFE.

*Sons of the Soil. The Country Doctor. The Justice of Peace. The Village Rector. The Environs of Paris.*

## SECOND PART: *Études Philosophiques.*

*The Phædon of To-day. The Magic Skin. Jesus Christ in Flanders. Melmoth Absolved. Massimilla Doni. The Hidden Masterpiece. Gambara. Balthazar Claës, the Alkahest. President Fritot. The Philanthropist. The Hated Son. Adieu. Juana. The Recruit. El Verdugo. A Drama on the Seashore. Maître Cornelius. The Red Inn. Catherine de' Medici. The New Abeilard. The Elixir of Life. The Life and Adventures of an Idea. The Exiles. Louis Lambert. Séraphita.*

## THIRD PART: *Études Analytiques.*

*Anatomy of Educating Bodies. Little Miseries of Human Life. Physiology of Marriage. Pathology of Social Life. The Monograph of Virtue. Dialogue, philosophical and political, on the Nineteenth Century.*

## II.

### THE MONTYON PRIZE.

#### BALZAC'S VIEW OF IT.

M. le Baron de Montyon bequeathed to the French Academy a sum producing about nine thousand francs a year, to reward the work most useful to good morals published during the two years preceding the distribution of the prize.

The Academy has set itself up as an office of literary charity. It divides the prize into three or four sums, which it distributes

to works without influence or morals; works which are so quickly forgotten that if the titles of the books crowned, for instance, between 1830 and 1836 were published, the Academy would blush on each of its forty foreheads.

The French Academy has not the right it arrogates to itself. It violates the intention of the testator. The sum should be given to a single work. If no work fulfils the conditions, the Academy ought to wait and capitalize the income. When the prize attains, for lack of worthy works, to a large sum, that reward offered to great efforts would stimulate literature far more powerfully than these alms, which are, in my opinion, illegal and not at all flattering.

I appealed to the Academy against its decision to admit "The Country Doctor" among the works to be crowned. I humbly represented that my work was not at the point of perfection (relatively to my own powers, of course) which I desired for it, and further, that the Academy could not take works not presented by the author; for I should be much hurt to have it declared by the chief of our literary bodies that I possessed a quarter, or a half, of the merit M. de Montyon required. M. Arnault, who seemed much surprised at my observations, informed me that the work had just been set aside on account of its political tendencies.

By dividing the prize as it does, the Academy alienates men of talent; it deters them from the extremely difficult undertaking desired by the testator.

"Such a work," Nodier said to me, "is hardly done twice in a century."

"That is precisely why the prize was created," I replied. "When it amounts to a hundred thousand francs at the end of ten years you'll have a work to crown; you may be sure of that."

It is, to my eyes, an immense misfortune for our country that forty individuals chosen from its most illustrious personages should be unable to have a great thought. To encourage the literature of young ladies instead of taking means to produce a "Vicar of Wakefield" is, and should *not* be, the result of the Montyon prize.

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